

DAD VIOLENCE AGAINST MOM:

A VERY BUMPY ROAD

by

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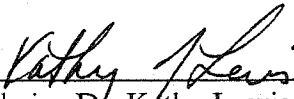
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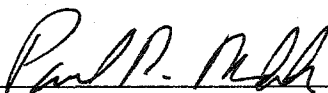
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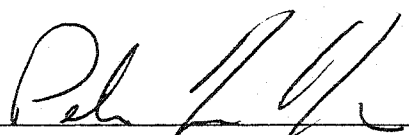
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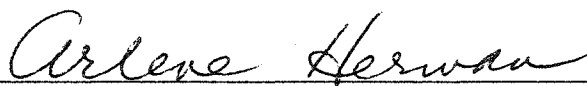
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ABSTRACT

This study emerged from an in-depth work experience at a Children Who Witness Abuse Program as it brought forth an awareness that children often struggle alone through years of exposure to father violence before entering counselling. The study wished to investigate reasons for children's invisibility during their exposure to dad violence against mom. This is a research study on how children and their mothers experience awareness during the process of identification and acknowledgement of the impact on children exposed to dad violence against moms.

Past clients of the adjoining transition house were paid participants of this research. Three sets of family interviews were conducted with each of three families consisting of children and their mothers. This research combined Glaser and Strauss' grounded theory method with Jean Baker Miller's construction of "growth-fostering relationships" and Ruthanne Kurth-Schai and Karen J. Warren's constructions of the term "ecofeminism". Interconnection between family, community, and researcher were facilitated during the research process. The emergence of a core category: *A Very Bumpy Road*, and five subcategories: *introduction: agreeing to participate in family interviews about dad violence (DV); what is DV?; first responses to DV; legal/outside interventions; and we are in recovery* reflect the commonalities of experience through the three families. The findings in this research held special meanings for the families as the grounded theory analyst interpreted their words and created a document for them to critique.

All of the children in this study suffered child abuse. They all had, at a minimum, been terrorized during dad violence against their moms. Children were not only aware of

the dad violence in their homes, from its inception; they held invaluable perceptions and insights. This research, therefore, brings forth a wondering of how the alteration of *abused* to *exposed*, minimizes these children's actual experience. This research, also, alters the question, *why does she stay?*, to an awareness of all the ways these families attempted to stop the violence.

All of the participants in this research study feel outstanding success at being *in recovery* and are primarily successful in their continuing attempts to shield themselves from the violent dads.

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I dedicate this thesis in memory of Spencer Dewis

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The children—young women and young men— and their mothers, who were the participants in this research, for having the courage to reveal yourselves to the world and me. I am honoured by your participation in this work. THANK YOU SO MUCH.

Cross-Border Peace Talks

There is a place
beyond the borders
where love grows,
and where peace is not the frozen silence
drifting across no man's land
from two heavily-defended entrenchments,
but the stumbling, stammering attempts of
long-closed throats
to find words to bridge the distance;
neither is it a simple formula
that reduces everything to labels,
but an intricate and complex web
of feeling and relationship
which spans a wider range than you'd ever thought possible.

That place is not to be found on the map
of government discussions
or political posturing.
It does not exist within the borders
of Catholic or Protestant,
Irish or British,
male or female,
old or young,
it lies beyond,
and is drawn with different points of reference.

To get to that place,
you have to go,
(or be pushed out)
beyond the borders,
to where it is lonely, fearful, threatening, unknown.
Only after you have wandered for a long time
in the dark,
do you begin to bump into others,
also branded,
exiled,
border-crossers,
and find you walk on common ground.

It is not an easy place to be,
this place beyond the borders.
It is where you learn that there is more pain in love than in hate,
more courage in forbearance than in vengeance,
more remembering needed in forgetting
and always new borders to cross.

By Kathy Galloway

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

When my sister's eldest daughter was a toddler, she was somewhat akin to a squirrel, in that she consistently collected small objects and hid them. On one particular morning, when my sister shook her daughter's bed covers, hundreds of tiny stones flew up and scattered around the room, causing exasperated laughter from my sister, and a new family story to be recaptured again and again throughout the years.

Anyone who has visited my home would know that I, too, am a rock collector. My favourite, a petrified log, baffles newcomers when they attempt to throw it onto the fire. Also, my parents house contained a fireplace of quartz and gold, gathered by hand and bought from a nearby, closed, gold mine. At the time my sister's toddler began her intense gathering of tiny stones, our family's affinity for rock picking had not yet been articulated. Her wise interpretation of a family trait enabled a new connection to be spoken and felt within the family.

Children's ways of communicating family traditions appear to begin with a deep wisdom that connects families through profound, yet simple, actions. We marvel at the inexperienced interpretations of our offspring. Yet, for the most part, these actions connect us deeply as a family in spite of remaining unbound by formal narrative. Their lack of knowledge concerning the borders of cultural constraint renews our perceptual lens and allows movement to return to our cemented experiential ways of being. I have a great curiosity and faith in this deep connecting ability of children. They seem able to breach insurmountable chasms between enemies—as Joan of Arc, at thirteen, brought unity to France—and enable evolutionary dialogue in places no others will dare to

tread—as the youth in Tiananmen Square who stepped in front of the advancing tank, and stopped it.

It seems to me, the evolution of who we are, and how we came to be as we are, is steeped in our evolving choices of how we perceive and dialogue within our world. Children's ways of enveloping new information shift our rigid ways of being in the world and enable a welcoming way of perceiving alternatives. It is this ability of children that I wished to identify and acknowledge in my research. For it has always been my belief that children are not humans-in-form, but wise and knowing human beings with alternative ways of communicating.

...the image of loving perception challenges us to throw aside preconceived notions of what it means to experience life as "a child" and to develop the motivation, openness, and flexibility required to gain awareness of an infinite variety of ways of being....Adults from all walks of life are called upon to learn to relate to children in the egalitarian, mutually respectful, and supportive manner....For it is through responding to the specific needs of others across domains of difference that moral sensitivity and creativity are developed and enriched.

(Kurth-Schai, 1997, p. 205)

What entices people to want to move into a way of being that allows more connections? What can we learn from children's ways of learning? As a human being, I have consistently wondered at the role of dependence, independence and interdependence in my life. During this research process my desire was to pause to investigate the effect of shifting interdependence to an awareness of interconnectedness. Therefore, I situated my research in a place where these two words could be articulated into a more meaningful segregation.

Children as Persons

Due to Bergh's noble reputation for standing against cruelty, in 1874, Etta Wheeler, a social worker brought the case of Mary Ellen McCormack to his attention. During the 1800s there were laws to protect animals but there were no laws to remove children from abusive homes. In a renowned trial Bergh was able to win the release of Mary Ellen from her abusive foster parents. Despite the disclaimer that Henry Bergh was acting as a private citizen and not in the function of his official capacity as the president of The ASPCA [American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals], a myth developed that Bergh rescued Mary Ellen because if nothing else she should be provided with the same protections as an animal.

(ASPCA, 2000, p. 1)

There is a lack of recognition of children as full-bodied citizens within any legal framework. The construction of legal discourse, as it pertains to children, seems to create a resistant and disconnecting dialogue that sets individual family authority against social responsibility of citizens. It is a dialogue created to keep children under the protection of their most loving and closest family members. However, as the above reference illustrates, children are afforded no protection within violent homes. It would seem, therefore, that identification and acknowledgement of children within violent families is required to further their safe co-habitation within their relational world.

A co-constructed meaning of family could allow the move to intervene against cruelty by bringing forth an alternative to children's invisibility in violent homes. This journey to equality appears enabled, further, by the international construction of legislation and policy within the United Nations. For children, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child came into being in September, 1990, and "for the first time an international legal framework exists on which those concerned for the human rights of children can base their work" (Amnesty International, 1995 p. 12).

These social constructions on behalf of children are enabling a space for identification and acknowledgement of children as rightful citizens on this planet.

My struggle to construct safe sanctuary for civilian populations (mothers and their children) against advancing armies (violent men) has been ongoing for more than thirty years. As a human rights activist for Amnesty International, the challenge of the work has always been to retain human rights in a besieged landscape. Whether involving heads of state or heads of families, atrocities by individuals and/or state agents appear to require similar constructs of individual and collective rights. In our work toward an expectation of safety through and across borders, could we also construct an expectation of safety through and across families?

As my awareness of the struggle for collective, or global, human rights continued evolving, my years as a public school teacher brought awareness of individual, or personal, human rights. Purposive attention to children's lived experiences allowed an awareness of the ability of equal identification and acknowledgement to afford children a creative space to dialogue current struggles. I became aware of the possibility of allowing children's ways of discourse to be heard and respected. The classroom children came to hold a high expectation of support and resources from the classroom community. The interactions between students during their work and play were respectful. As well, the response from parents and myself awakened a belief in the ability of children to articulate their experiences. It also altered my relationship with parents as outsiders to classroom experiences. Each child was the representative of a unique family culture. In order to understand children's ways of articulating, adults were required to interact *with* children, rather than *above* children.

As concerns for nurturance and empowerment are woven through mutually supportive themes of relationship, pluralism, inclusion, and transformation, we are supported in our attempts to create a world both responsive to children's needs and receptive to their contributions.

(Kurth-Schai, 1997, p. 208)

The research question presented in this study is: *How do children and their mothers experience awareness during the process of identification and acknowledgement of the impact on children exposed to father violence against mothers?*

The contextual frame I chose for my research emerged from my experience at the Children Who Witness Abuse Program. In my work as the program coordinator/counsellor, I was not responsible for the initial identification of children. Children were referred most frequently by their mothers, often by the local transition houses through women's groups; and less frequently by the justice, social service, community, and education systems. The majority of the children referred were no longer living in a violent home. As time progressed I realized that many children undergo separation, transition house experiences, supervised visitation, unsupervised visitation, extremely traumatic custody and access disputes, and adversarial joint custody decisions, before counselling is initiated. At first I assumed this was the result of the tertiary nature of the Children Who Witness Abuse Program, but later realized it involved a reluctance on the part of counsellors to see children during the parent's separation. People involved with the family at this time did not wish to be involved in any impending custody dispute. It also involved the common practice of not intervening on behalf of a child until the child exhibited symptoms recognized by attending professionals as severe enough to require intervention.

The frustration I felt as a counsellor was also felt throughout my teaching years. Resources for children in difficulty are scarce. Many children seem to be required to exhibit severe behavioural and psychological disturbance before they are able to access remedial interventions. Too often children who are witnesses to extreme violence are not identified as requiring support and/or counselling. I believe this frustration is common to all people who work on behalf of traumatized children.

Significance of the Study

One major omission amidst all the dialogue, policy, and legal framing on children exposed to domestic violence is the official acknowledgement and identification of children alongside others at the domestic violence scene. To date, there is no consistent data collected and forwarded to provincial and national reporting bodies. Statistics cited remain vague and estimated. There are a few revolutionary responders currently involved in constructing supportive responses, on scene, for mothers and their children [*Project ERIN*, Los Angeles, California (Joint Committee on Domestic Violence, 1999, p. 31); *Child Development-Community Policing Program*, Yale, Connecticut (Yale Child Development Community Policing Program, 2000, p.1), (see Practitioner Context, this proposal, p. 23)]. However, these programs are the exception rather than the norm. Budget constraints in children's programming make new responses all but impossible for heavily laden service providers to children. Reports by these responders are not yet included in statistical documentation.

Unfortunately, as the only and/or primary witnesses to violence in the home, children bring much understanding to what it means when people enter their violent home, view the violence, and cannot stop it from continuing. Therefore, I believe that

non-interference in a family wrought with male violence is not a neutral response. It is my contention that battered women are locked in a web of societal constraints where struggle will only bring further constriction, and freedom requires community compassion and protection from attack. And it is the act of compassionate empowerment, witnessed by dependent children also caught in the web that will allow an expectation of safety to appear for children exposed to domestic violence. To believe otherwise, for me, is simply to engage in a slow dance of continued alignment to the dominant discourse of patriarchy that allows a man to do his will within the confines of his family.

I wished my research to increase the knowledge of children exposed to domestic violence through inquiry into the family stories created as the family becomes aware of the impact on children. I entered this research with the assumption that rather than assessing symptomatology in children exposed to domestic violence it would serve children better to look at: relationship to others, length of violence, level of violence, and, history of exposure to violence. I wished to investigate ways of counselling children that could enable a healing story to emerge from their lives.

Issues of Terminology

There is an evolving terminology to depict violence within intimate adult relationships. What began as “a family secret or acceptable behaviour within a patriarchal society” (Jaffe, Wolfe, & Wilson, 1990, p. 14), has amassed various labels and meanings depending upon the author. Examples of the terms used by reporting bodies are:

- Domestic Violence (Joint Committee on Domestic Violence, 1999, & United Nations Children’s Fund, 2000);
- Spousal Violence (Fitzgerald, 1999);
- Spousal Assault (Ministry of Attorney General Police Services Division, 1999); and

- Violence Against Women In Relationships (Ministry of Attorney General, 2000).

My use of the term in the title of this research, “dad violence against mom”, is an intentional, relational phrase used to highlight the children’s relationship to the adult male assailant and the adult female victim of the violence. It seems to me that the dissonance created when love and intimacy interconnect with violence would impact children on all levels of their relational being. The initial awareness of this impact was the focus of my research.

My use of the terms mom and dad are also narrowly defined. Mom is the biological mother who is also the primary caregiver. Dad is the adult male within the household who is currently functioning in a father role. The reason for the discrepancy in the definitions aligns with the current descriptions where the majority of children will be identified as residing with their biological mothers, but data concerning the involved male adult are usually not recorded.

In BC Government Policy, violence against women in relationships is defined as:

physical or sexual assault, or the threat of physical or sexual assault of women by men with whom they have, or have had ongoing or intimate relationships, whether or not they are legally married or living together at the time of the assault or threat.

(Ministry of Attorney General, 2000, p. 2)

There is, also, an evolution of the term used for children who reside in homes where violence exists within intimate adult relationships. To date, there is no consensual designation for these children to allow easy access to the knowledge available in the literature. They truly appear to be “the ‘forgotten,’ ‘unacknowledged,’ ‘hidden,’ ‘unintended,’ and ‘silent’ victims” (Holden, 1998, p. 1). Examples used by reporting bodies are:

- Children Exposed to Domestic Violence (Joint Committee on Domestic Violence, 1999);
- Children Who Witness Abuse (British Columbia/Yukon Society of Transition Houses, 1991);
- Children Who Have Witnessed Domestic Violence (United Nations Children's Fund, 2000)
- Children Who Witness Family Violence (Fitzgerald, 1999);
- Spousal Assault Victims: Women (and children) (Ministry of Attorney General Police Services Division, 1999);
- Violence Against Women and Children in Relationships (Ministry of Attorney General, 2000).

The first international conference concerned with the impact of children's exposure to domestic violence was entitled "Children Exposed to Family Violence". It was held in 1996, and hosted by the Family Violence and Sexual Assault Institute and the University of Texas. I attended the 1999 conference, in Vancouver, BC, entitled "Children Exposed to Domestic Violence", as the Children Who Witness Abuse Program Coordinator in Prince George, British Columbia.

The term "Children Who Witness Abuse" is used for provincial programs. It denotes the earlier naming of the program and the limited understanding available at that time. The use of the word "witness" caught the recognition of the impact of observing father violence against mothers. The evolution to the term "exposed" enables a realization that children residing in violent homes are not simply observing violence, but are relating and participating in the dynamics of the family home. As I have stated previously, it was my intent to bring forth an awareness of the relationship between the child, the assailant and the victim. At this time I would put forward a suggestion that a further evolution of the term would acknowledge the level of terror experienced by children who live with battering men. Children are not merely exposed to dad violence—they are abused through their exposure.

Overview of the Study

I have briefly described my beliefs regarding children as essential beings on this planet, and my concern regarding the lack of acknowledgement for their contributions to family and society. Their identity as full members remains a concern as well. This research was a study of how children can be included as rightful citizens within the home as well as in their community. Primarily, I was interested in investigating what would happen if we began speaking about interconnectedness of families rather than interdependence. For, it seems to me that there are patterns of interactions that will either 'open space' or set parameters around space. One produces an open, interactive person capable of personal and public critical analysis; the other produces a closed, static person capable of clearly stating and defining accepted public knowledge. Should our focus concerning acquisition of knowledge delineate, refine, and reflect this knowledge in our interactions with others, including children? Would it cause a shift in our way of interacting and creating connections? It was my assumption that identification and acknowledgement of the impact of dad violence against moms on children is essential to their well being. Yet I also assumed there is a need for expansion during this time. Therefore, I used Jean Baker Miller's construction of "growth-fostering relationships" (Miller & Stiver, 1997, p.16), and Ruthanne Kurth-Schai and Karen J. Warren's constructions of the term "ecofeminism" (Warren, 1997), to create a space for children's ways of being in the world. My effort to include each child abused through dad violence against moms into the light of this space was united with an exploration of the identification process used by moms and their children.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is presented in five chapters: Chapter one introduces: children as persons; the significance of the study; issues of terminology; an overview of the study; and the organization of the thesis. Chapter two shows the relevance in the literature through a review of: relational theory; ecofeminism; children in the context of dad violence against moms; and the role of the children's counsellor. Chapter three includes the rationale for the chosen method; method; and analysis of data. Chapter four presents the results discovered through grounded theory analysis. Chapter five presents a summary of the study; limitations of the study; and implications for further study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

As with every plunge into the world of literature I, too, searched for connections to add to the web of knowledge already known and felt. In this instance, my personal way of being as a counsellor sought unity with the community, provincial, national, and international writings on children abused through dad violence against moms. After living and breathing the Children Who Witness Abuse Program, where I often felt an interchange between isolation and sanctuary, I welcomed this opportunity to construct a path to the wider dominant community. "I had been mourning the deep absence of balance in human life and, especially, the horrible denial and suppression of the feminine – in women, in men, in nature" (Walker, 2000, p.246).

The passage from a safe healing transition house to the wider community remains scalding for most women returning from male violence. Workers within this sanctuary are vicariously exposed to this violence, also. I am aware that my world had been shrinking, and therefore, saw this research as a time to reconnect with others who have constructed knowledge of male violence. I wondered how my experiential way of counselling, my knowledge of children abused through dad violence against moms, and my ecofeminist relationship with the world could connect into one being without feelings of fragmentation and compartmentalization. This wondering guided my search through the literature.

Relational Theory

...And until all of humanity, without exception, undergoes a metamorphosis, wars will continue to be waged, and everything that has been carefully built up, cultivated and grown will be cut down and destroyed, only to start all over again!

I've often been down in the dumps, but never desperate....I've made up my mind to lead a different life from other girls...

(Frank, 1998, p.301)

Often, as adults, we “reflect societal and cultural assumptions so deeply entrenched in all of us that we scarcely question their validity, we simply think of them as ‘the truth’...” (Miller, & Stiver, 1997, p. 2). This is not so with children. They consistently question assumptions with “the immediate grasp of psychological processes, the keeping of a watchful eye and open ear constantly tuned to the relational” (Gilligan, 1991, p. 15). Throughout my years as a teacher, mother, and counsellor I have always been drawn to this creative resource within children. Without articulation, I have explored children’s joyful ways of growing and learning. I marvel at their intense grasping quest to connect with all things. And how they “seemed to want to leave no question in our minds about the strength of their voices and the depths of their knowing and the intensity of their desire for honest relationships between us” (p. 15).

My sensual trust in children’s wisdom led me to the articulated knowledge of Jean Baker Miller and Irene Pierce Stiver. Their book, *The healing connection: How women form relationships in therapy and in life* (1997) closely aligns to the way I wished to construct my research. Miller and Stiver present “a new vision of psychological development and emotional health for all people....in which everyone participates in ways that foster the development of all the people involved, something [they would] call ‘mutual psychological development’” (p. 17). This mutual connection is accomplished through “participating in growth-fostering relationships” (p. 16).

The goal of development is not the creation of a bounded entity with independent internal psychic structure that turns to the outside world only in a state of need or deficiency. On the contrary, in the ideal pattern of development, we move toward participation in relational growth rather than toward simple attainment of personal gratification.

(p. 56)

Although Miller and Stiver do not use the term, *interconnectedness*, they do speak of their desire to “convey the *active* participation necessary in creating growth-fostering interplay” (p. 57). Their discussion is similar to the interplay between the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights—based around *individual* human rights—and the Indigenous Peoples creation of an alternative set of human rights—based on *collective* human rights (Ewen, 1994). Miller and Stiver suggest a challenge to the “old framework of unquestioned assumptions about the value of separation and autonomy” (Miller & Stiver, 1997, p. 15). They wish to present “the action of creating together the relationships within which all life activity takes place offers us a more accurate notion of the optimal human condition” (p. 61).

For me, this feels very much like the relationship between my children and myself; and my students and myself. It is not the discourse of the master and apprentice style of learning; but the unspoken larger dynamic of creating shared growth through relationship. It is the loving intimacy that creates curiosity around the other person, and this curiosity enables mutual learning and growth to both.

It is not a question of giving or getting for one or the other, nor of being gratified or not gratified in the usual sense of those terms. Rather, at these moments of interchange, a person moves into more connection based on her more real representation of her experience. Simultaneously, she comes to feel in greater connection with her own inner experience, and to feel a *right* to that experience.

(Miller & Stiver, 1997, p. 133)

This way of connection represents the hopes and dreams I had for my children and my students. There was never a finite or fixed endpoint to our growth. We continually learned from each other. We both learned “a world of connections with others that open out to new possibilities” (Miller and Stiver, 1997, p.188). For me, this represented my highest goal for my children and my students. There is not a goal of learned dependence upon a mother/instructor. Rather there is a goal to enable a growth fostering relationship for further opportunities to grow within an ever-widening community.

Miller and Stiver (1997) also address the devastating disconnections that occur within families where violently abusive fathers enforce isolation and control over all family members (p. 60). Their theory challenges sanctioned patriarchal authority. Miller and Stiver acknowledge the impossibility of mutuality within the constraints of “the dominant patriarchal culture’s imposition” (p. 150). Instead they speak of the “central relational paradox [and their response] to legitimate for each person both the desire for connection and his or her reasons for fearing it” (p. 147). Thus, there is a creation allowing movement away from the old restrictive place where “it then becomes ‘normal’ to treat others destructively and to derogate them, to obscure the truth of what you are doing, by creating false explanations, and to oppose actions toward equality” (Miller, 1986, p. 8).

...I will not permit
 You to bind my life to yours
 But I will tell you that our lives
 Are bound together
 And I will demand
 That you live as though you understand
 This one salient fact.

...

Masculinity broke women and men on its knee,
 Took away our futures,
 Made our hopes, fears, thoughts, and good instincts
 "Irrelevant to the larger struggle,"

...

I am a dangerous woman
 Because I will say all this
 Lying neither to you nor with you
 Neither trusting nor despising you.
 I am dangerous because
 I won't give up or shut up
 Or put up with your version of reality.
 You have conspired to sell my life quite cheaply
 And I am especially dangerous
 Because I will never forgive nor forget
 Or ever conspire
 To sell your life in return.

By Joan Cavanagh

(Kelly, 1998, p. 316)

"Women's ways of knowing" (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986)

offer inclusion of children as rightful citizens in the world. My exploration to identify and acknowledge children abused through dad violence against moms connects well with the "need to be alert to suppressed voices in order to share the knowledge that cannot be overtly spoken by girls and women within the constraints of this culture" (Bernardez, 1991, p. 216). I had a curiosity around the impact of acknowledging the isolation factor so prevalent in male violence. I wished to understand self-in-relation theory as it interfaced with the process of identification and acknowledgement of children within father violence against mothers' relationships. Do connections with the wider community benefit these children and their families?

Ecofeminism

The term ecofeminism was coined, in 1974, by the French writer Francoise d'Eaubonne to reflect the potential of women's creativity to construct new ways of

interactions between men, women, and nature to ensure survival of planet earth and its inhabitants (Merchant, 1990, p. 100). It is a relatively new term for the very old feeling of ecstatic interconnection with the sacred natural world. In the ecofeminist way of perceiving the world, the

...most highly prized are values which stress the importance of beings-in-relationship—mutual care, friendship, reciprocity, diversity, and appropriate trust. Weblike networks of care and responsibility help the individual to establish a strong sense of self while maintaining connection with others through mutually beneficial patterns of exchange.

(Kurth-Schai, 1997, p. 201)

E.O. Wilson articulates this mutuality in his term biophilia to “make the case that to explore and affiliate with life is a deep and complicated process in mental development....our existence depends on this propensity, our spirit is woven from it, hope rises on its currents” (1984, p. 1). He also contends that “to the degree that we come to understand other organisms, we will place a greater value on them, and on ourselves” (p. 2). The rhythm of life interconnects through all species.

It is time to invent moral reasoning of a new and more powerful kind, to look to the very roots of motivation and understand why, in what circumstances and on which occasions, we cherish and protect life....The prevailing myths concerning our predatory actions toward each other and the environment are obsolete, unreliable, and destructive. The more the mind is fathomed in its own right, as an organ of survival, the greater will be the reverence for life for purely rational reasons....The paradox can be resolved by changing its premises into forms more suited to ultimate survival, by which I mean protection of the human spirit.

(p. 139)

The thought-sense of interconnection reverberates in women's retention of their childish ways of combining sensual knowledge with sacred communion. “We enter our sacred garden through a variety of gates....out of a yearning for....the penetrating alertness that lets us connect with what is sacred” (Anderson & Hopkins, 1991, p. 72).

“One woman we talked with about gates that had led her into her sacred garden told us, ‘When I was a girl I would roam through the pastures with my horse, Spotty, and there would be a communion, a great sensuous song of life being sung through us that I have no words for. And later, in lovemaking, I knew that we are called into an ecstatic relationship with life.

[In another woman this communion took place] during the birth of her first child.... ‘this communion took place in my body, not my mind,’ she explained. ‘It permeated and diffused throughout my whole body.’....she [came to understand] that the connectedness she felt through her body was simply another entryway into her sacred garden.

(p. 73)

Ruthanne Kurth-Schai (1997) speaks directly to the inclusion of children in the ecofeminist writings. In her construction of a “child-centered social ethic” she speaks to the aspects of providing “the conceptual and ethical framework necessary to create societies both responsive to children’s needs *and* respectful of their aspirations and contributions” (p.199). Through a constructive framework that embraces the diversity of all participants in the community, an ecofeminist lens brings forth “the diversity and complexity of children’s experience” (p. 205). Is it enough to speak to children of turning away from a destructive, violent, and oppressive world? Or can we create a way of being in the world that offers them an alternative? As well, an alternative that offered to co-create the alternative with them seemed a worthy exploration.

Children in the Context of Dad Violence Against Moms

The last decade produced a plethora of data on children abused through dad violence against moms. The North American conferences—now expanded to annual international events—have enabled Canadian practitioners to retain a cutting edge role in the world. As discussed in the introduction, there is a lack of consensus on what to call this type of maltreatment of children. Also, it is no longer a simple question of whether or not children are impacted by abuse through dad violence against moms. For current

consensus acknowledges this trauma. Rather, the question now forming is “in what ways are boys and girls at different stages of development affected in different spheres of their functioning, and what are the significant risk and protective factors that predict short-term and long-term sequelae of this traumatic experience?” (Jaffe, Sudermann, & Geffner, 2000, p. 4). Generalized acceptance of the multiple concerns relating to children’s abuse through dad violence has enabled specificity within the discourse. As well, correlation factors are being delineated and considered. It would appear, therefore, that more delineated and refined statistical data specific to children’s exposure would be of benefit.

Also, in the last decade the knowledge of child abuse through dad violence against moms has moved from the assumption of keeping the children out of involvement in adult concerns to an awareness of the correlation between dad violence against moms and other forms of child maltreatment. Knowledge of children’s abuse through dad violence against moms currently means accessing a wider awareness of the differing levels of contextual vulnerability of these children. These vulnerabilities remain framed in concerns for the primary victim of the violence, with a growing awareness of the need to identify the children present.

However, despite the earlier research findings and the child deaths that had been found to have occurred in contexts of domestic violence, and despite knowledge from refuges about links between domestic violence and abuse of children, it is only during the 1990’s that these links have emerged in the public and social work debates...

(Hester, Pearson & Harwin, 2000, p. 34)

Physical violence against women is likely to begin with pregnancy (Hester, Pearson & Harwin, 2000, p. 18). “Studies in many countries have shown high levels of violence during pregnancy resulting in risk to the health of both the mother and the

unborn foetus” (United Nations Children’s Fund, 2000, p. 9). Child survival is, also, impacted by physical violence against intimate female partners. In one study the children were six times more likely to die before the age of five when mothers were physically and sexually abused by their partners (p. 12). “In many of these cases, it is likely that the physical fragility of children, combined with their isolation from state agencies and other outside observers, exacerbated their likelihood of dying during episodes of family violence” (Websdale, 1999, p.202). In Ontario between 1974 and 1994 there were 705 cases of intimate femicide. The offenders also killed 74 additional persons—most of these were the children of the victims. As well, there were more than 100 children who witnessed their mothers’ deaths (Joint Committee on domestic violence, 1999, p. 3).

Bowker, Arbitell and McFerron found frequency and severity of physical violence and marital rape to be predictive of the severity of child abuse (as cited in Hester, Pearson, & Harwin, 2000, p.31). And Truesdell, McNeil and Deschner found “wife abuse is more common in families in which incest occurs than in the general population (p.32).

Further:

Both Hooper (1992) and Forman (1995) argue, on the basis of their studies concerning mothers of sexually abused children, that the sexual abuse of the children could be seen as constituting domestic violence or abuse in relation to the mothers. The violence to the mothers also served to distance them as a source of support for the children, so that the men could more easily continue their sexual abuse.

(Hester, Pearson, & Harwin, 2000, p. 40)

Hester’s (Hester, Pearson, & Harwin, 1998) study of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), child abuse cases involving father violence against mothers exposes examples where “abuse of the woman and of the child(ren) by the same man was so closely inter-connected that they were simultaneously expressions

of both domestic violence and child abuse” (Hester, Pearson, & Harwin, 2000, p. 39).

This abuse may take the form of a serious threat to the children’s physical safety in order to control the mothers’ behavior; or it may involve implicating the children in the mother’s abuse, through force or invitation to take part in the father’s abuse (p. 39).

Although mother’s elevated risk at the time of ending her relationship to the violent father is becoming common knowledge; the elevated risk to children is less known. Perhaps the most internationally known example is the Bristol Inquiry of New Zealand in 1994. In the aftermath of her three children’s death at the hand of their father, Christine Bristol called for a ministerial inquiry into the awarding of interim custody of the children to her violent husband. This inquiry resulted in a significant acknowledgement of the danger to children during unsupervised child contact with violent fathers. The children were vulnerable

...because the law and practices did not deal with a situation where a parent, although he had allegedly been violent to his spouse, was otherwise regarded by all who dealt with him, including counsel for the children, as being a proper person to have custody of his children...

(Busch & Robertson, 2000, p. 273)

Also, emerging into awareness is the knowledge that violent men will use “contact with children as a means to continue their violence [against the mother]” (Mullender & Morley, 1994, p. 8). When violent men lose their primary target through marital separation—but retain contact with the children of the family—the changed dynamics can throw children into vulnerable and volatile situations.

In light of the emerging knowledge of the relation between severity of dad violence against moms and severity of child maltreatment it would seem important to be mindful of the level of escalation of violence within the family. Also, it would be worthy

of notation that at the time of the greatest risk to the woman in the relationship—the time of separation—it is also very likely the time of court mandated father visitations for the children. Therefore, in families where fathers are predisposed to aggression and are in the process of learning single parenthood, the aggression to the children could also be heightened.

It seems appropriate to suggest that violence exists on a continuum for children and their mothers. The level of violence can range from a threat of violence through to a murder/suicide of all family members. I have counselled women and their children as the violence ends and they continue in their marriage with new hope. It was more common, however, to counsel women and their children through separation and continuing violence after a marriage of escalating violence. Children's knowledge and understanding of the violence also ranges from minimal awareness to fearing for their own, and their mother's, life.

Practitioner Context

The Yale Child Study Center's Program on Child Development and Community Policing offers one example of the utilization of current knowledge on children abused through dad violence against moms. Their program trains community-based police officers in traumatic stress and child development through a national model of collaboration between law enforcement, juvenile justice, and mental health professionals (Yale Child Development Community Policing Program, 2000, p.1). The program's effort to connect community police officers with mental health clinicians constructs a coordinated response for children and their families that reduces "the psychological burdens of violence" (p. 1).

Another example of a leading edge program for children and their families offered when children are present at the scene of a spousal assault is PROJECT ERIN (Emergency Response Intervention Network), in Los Angeles (Joint Committee on Domestic Violence, 1999, p. 31). In this program two Domestic Violence Interventionists offer on-site counselling; one interventionist to the mother and the other to the child. They also retain contact with the victims in the days following the incident.

These programs are excellent examples of the acknowledgement required to support families in their cries for help. Isolated families cannot stop violence without concerted community collaboration. Specialists in child development and the impact of trauma are promoting these programs as essential shifts to enable a “new era of much-needed prevention-intervention outcome research” (Pynoos, Steinberg & Goenjian, 1996, p. 336). Other professionals (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Diamond & Orenstein, 1990; Gilligan, Rogers, & Tolman, 1991; Gilligan, 1982; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Anderson & Hopkins, 1991; Warren, 1997; Arrien, 1993; Wilson, 1984) are creating discourse to construct new ways of practice.

Individualism has been such a dominating force in American psychological theory and practice, that relatively little attention has been paid to understanding how environments help—or hinder—human healing and growth....We must begin to create naturally occurring, healing environments that provide some of the corrective experiences that are vital for recovery.

(Bloom, 1997, p.117)

As a counsellor of children abused through dad violence against moms I welcome the creation of programs that aim to interfere with the impact of this violence.

...advocates must identify the harm that witnessing woman abuse has on children; understand the forms and dynamics of woman abuse; understand the risks to children from abuse and neglect; develop an

understanding of why women stay in abusive relationships for periods of time and offer ideas for collaborative intervention in woman abuse cases. (Echlin & Osthoff, 2000, p. 209)

Acknowledgement and identification of the impact on children during first response by others offers an opportunity to work with children to minimize their vulnerability and offset further "effects on the acquisition of developmental competencies, the achievement of developmental transitions, moral development, and emerging personality" (Pynoos, Steinberg & Goenjian, 1996, p. 332). The benefit of initiating support and resources to children at the site of initial identification offers hope to besieged families. The continuance of the alternative allows children to live in extreme vulnerability that enables opportunity for further victimization. The focus of this research was directed to a place where interference in the battering cycle might impact beneficially on the safety and health of the children and mothers.

Statistical and Policy Context

In most reports on domestic violence, if mentioned at all, children are added as a disconnected addendum within the report. There are usually only estimates for children. Actual hard data is very rare. Currently, children are attached to provincial and national domestic violence reports in a simplistic and vague manner. For example, in *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile 1999* (Fitzgerald, 1999, all italics in citations have been added by this author):

The Violence Against Women Survey *estimated* that nearly 4 in 10 women (39%) who experienced violence reported that their children witnessed the violence. *At a minimum*, this would mean that *approximately* 1,000,000 children in the Canadian population have witnessed violence against their mothers by their fathers (p. 30)....

Current estimates of the problem in Canada and elsewhere *are likely* an undercounting of the true extent of the violence witnessed by children.

Many parents assume that children have been protected from the violence, but recent literature *suggests* evidence to the contrary that between 80 and 90 percent of children in homes where there is spousal violence are aware of and affected by the violence (p. 31)....

In 1996, an *estimated* 260,000 children in Canada, or 8% of those aged 4 to 11 years, were reported by a parent to have witnessed at least some violence in the home.

(p. 32)

The Survey of Spousal Assaults Reported to Police in 1995 in British Columbia

does not contain references regarding children. However, it does supply a profile of a reported spousal assault (four points of the profile reproduced here):

- The offence occurs in the accused and victim's shared residence.
- The victim is female (in nine out of ten incidents) and is most likely between the ages of 25 and 35 years.
- The accused is male (in nine out of ten incidents) and is most likely between the ages of 25 and 35 years.
- More than two-thirds of the accused charged with spousal assault have a prior criminal record. Of those persons charged with prior criminal records, nearly half have a record for violent offences.

(Police Services Division, 1999, p. viii)

We could extrapolate general assumptions concerning children's context in this environment. For example, because the offences occur in the shared residence—and the residents are under 35—we could assume that minor children are present. This seems a grossly inadequate means of profiling children.

Currently, RCMP statistical data for British Columbia is compiled on the "Violence in Relationships Checklist" (See Checklist, Appendix I), in accordance with the Ministry of the Attorney General "Violence Against Women in Relationships Policy: D. Investigation/Charge; 19, 19a, 19b, 19c, 19d". (See VAWIR Policy, Appendix J). It is unclear as to why the data concerning children is not included in provincial statistics.

Role of Children's Counsellor

Children who live in a battering relationship experience the most insidious form of child abuse. Whether or not they are physically abused by either parent is less important than the psychological scars they bear from watching their fathers beat their mothers. They learn to become part of a dishonest conspiracy of silence. They learn to lie to prevent inappropriate behavior, and they learn to suspend fulfillment of their needs rather than risk another confrontation. They do extend a lot of energy avoiding problems. They live in a world of make-believe.

(Walker, 1979, p. 46)

The primary role of any children's counsellor is to assess each individual within the contextual frame of their life. For each child is varied and unique in the manner in which they cope with dad violence against moms. "There is not one typical reaction, but a range of behavioural and/or emotional difficulties *have* been observed as children respond to their own and their mother's distress and draw on whatever survival resources they have" (Mullender & Morley, 1994, p. 28). Children's reactions to trauma appear to suggest that differing forms of maltreatment give rise to similar "developmental adjustment problems, suggesting that very similar psychological processes may be commonly responsible" (Jaffe, Wolfe & Wilson, 1990, p. 68).

There appears to be a double-edged sword that cloaks children abused through dad violence against moms with continuing invisibility. On one edge there is the awareness that too often child problems are identified as initiating from identified behaviours of the child rather than disruptions due to dad violence against moms. Underreporting of dad violence against moms leaves children vulnerable to inappropriate assessment.

Estimates of family violence based on incidents reported to police and other agencies are particularly susceptible to additional confounding factors including the secrecy surrounding the issue, the dependency of the victim on the perpetrator, the lack of knowledge about available help, and

the fear of repercussions for reporting the event. All of these factors lead to underreporting and consequently to an underestimate of the extent of the problem (Johnson, 1996; Della Femina, Yeager, and Lewis, 1990; Stein and Lewis, 1992; and Widom, 1998).

(Fitzgerald, 1999, p. 9)

There is an identified lack of awareness by professionals of the need to identify the abuse through dad violence against moms as an important factor in their assessments involving children (Barnett, Miller-Perrin, & Perrin, 1997, p. 151). The other edge of the sword exposes the essential point of the need “to assess all areas of children’s adjustment (family, school, community) as well as different relationships that may be problematic” (Jaffe, Sudermann, & Geffner, 2000, p. 3). The American Psychological Association Ad Hoc Committee on Legal and Ethical Issues in the Treatment of Interpersonal Violence has stated: “it is imperative that professionals involved in these cases have adequate expertise in evaluating the parties to determine the risk of danger and the likelihood of prior victimization” (Jaffe & Geffner, 1998, p. 382). Unfortunately, male violence against women remains extremely underreported. “Research suggests that women who experience domestic violence are on average, beaten 35 times before they ask for help and then make between 5-12 different contacts in an effort to end the violence” (Hester, Pearson & Harwin, 2000, p.7).

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

Child: So I just sat there and listened to the pounding on the door. And then, [Dad] started coming up the stairs. Cause he climbed in through the window.

....

Sibling: I heard a thump, thump, thump, and I ran upstairs. And I thought that's when I jumped on [Dad] because he was kicking you on the ground.

Mom: Then he turned around and threw you against the banister. Broke the banister with you.

Sibling: Yeah.

Mom: And then he came back for me and then he threw me down and started kicking at me. And I said to [child] go get the neighbours to call the police.

....

Child: It was because I was watching. And then Mom told me to run—out to the people across the street. I went to go out the door and he grabbed my hair and threw me into the closet door.

....

Child: He had a knife.

2nd Sibling: No.

Child: You don't know. He had a knife, right?

Mom: I don't think [Dad] had a knife that day. Because he kicked me

Child: I remember a knife!

....

2nd Sibling: After that. I don't think she ever did nothing. Like, after that part where she tried to make a run for it and didn't make it. I think she just kind of...

Mom: Sat in the closet. Now...

2nd Sibling: Now she's just too scared to do anything.

Rationale for Chosen Method

.... I did not want to impose my will on others. I wanted the healing processes to grow out of the patient's own personality, not from suggestions by me that would have only a passing effect. My aim was to protect and preserve my patient's dignity and freedom, so that he could live his life according to his own wishes....

The individual is the only reality. The further we move away from the individual toward abstract ideas about *Homo sapiens*, the more likely we are to fall into error.

(Jung, 1964, p.45)

In preparation for this research, a time of employment occurred with the Children Who Witness Abuse (CWWA) Program in Prince George. I held a heartfelt desire to learn a way of interaction that would "DO NO HARM" to a very vulnerable research population. Therefore, a passage of time under the employ of a Transition House Society allowed learning about the lived experiences of children abused through dad violence against moms, and the children's abused mothers. As well, both counselled and counsellor could see and react to the counselling practice of an academically trained practitioner. This immersion practice enabled me to correct behaviours that seemed to trouble this population. It also, afforded time with experienced supervisors to teach me about silence and hiding hurts. I would like it noted, at this time, that the decision to enter and leave this employment was not planned as temporary research training. The decision came with the realization of the toll this type of work takes on any person. It does not allow a choice of working day and night on this one topic without impacting the health of all those involved in the dual process.

After two years of academic study, and one year of practice with over seventy families, my exploratory experience connected with a research method that embraces children's interactive ways of being: Grounded Theory. It is a "method for discovery" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 1) that "enjoins taking with great seriousness the words and

actions of the people studied” (p. 6). It contains a way to reflect and articulate my prime belief in children’s valuable contribution to discourse. “The importance of this methodology is that it provides a sense of vision, where it is that the analyst wants to go with the research.... and is interpretation based on systematically carried out inquiry” (p. 8). This allowed the emergence of a methodological acknowledgement of children and their mother’s way of discoursing the child abuse present through dad violence against moms.

As stated previously, the intention and purpose of this research is the creation of a contextual frame that would enable the child and counsellor to bring forth new and/or re-connections between child, family and community. Therefore, a method that seeks to “provide a common language (set of concepts) through which research participants, professionals, and others can come together to discuss ideas and find solutions to problems” (p. 56), provided a fitting research frame. Glaser and Strauss articulate the position that “generating grounded theory is a way of arriving at theory suited to its supposed uses” (1967, p. 3). Their premise that the generation of theory must “be brought into relation to the data, or there is a great danger that theory and empirical world will mismatch” (p. 6) coincided with my concern regarding the vast range of theory surrounding children with few constructed and applied protocols regarding children abused through dad violence against moms.

It was, also, my wish to create a document that is readable and meaningful to both clients and colleagues. The established style of writing within grounded theory is to address grounded theory writing to lay audiences and professionals (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 10).

Method

I immersed myself in the Grounded Theory methods articulated by Glaser, Strauss, and Corbin (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1997; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Initial readings contained many comfortable ways of interpreting possibilities of interconnection between previously segregated concepts. The discovery of their writings enabled a visioning of an entryway into an organic joining between my relationship with children and a way of constructing research that can be process driven. The following quote contains the primary matches:

What [Strauss contributed] in the development of this method were (a) the need to get out into the field to discover what is really going on; (b) the relevance of theory, grounded in data, to the development of a discipline and as a basis for social action; (c) the complexity and variability of phenomena and of human action; (d) the belief that persons are actors who take an active role in responding to problematic situations; (e) the realization that persons act on the basis of meaning; (f) the understanding that meaning is defined and redefined through interaction; (g) a sensitivity to the evolving and unfolding nature of events (process); and (h) an awareness of the interrelationships among conditions (structure), action (process), and consequences.

(Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 10)

It was Strauss and Corbin's (1998) definition of theory as: "A set of well-developed concepts related through statements of relationship, which together constitute an integrated framework that can be used to explain or predict phenomena" (p. 15), that enabled me to expand my knowledge of interactive learning to embrace theorizing.

Theorizing is the act of *constructing* from the data an explanatory scheme that systematically integrates various concepts through statements of relationship....It enables users to explain and predict events, thereby providing guides to action.

(p. 25)

This expanded interpretation of interactive learning was the skeletal frame for the procedure, data collection and analysis in this research study.

My experience at the CWWA Program revealed a site of inquiry—initial identification. The emergence of a core problem within this site flowed from the study of the initial family. The diversity of the second and third family saturated the initial properties and subcategories.

Theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes [her] data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop [her] theory as it emerges. This process is *controlled* by the emerging theory...

(Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 45)

The discovery process involved interconnection between interviewing, encoding of raw data, and a collation of emerging patterns.

Initial Contact with Potential Recommenders of Participants

An agreement of support with a transition house and myself was obtained. There was a community of support for all those involved with the research process, including myself (See Appendix C). The transition house staff held in-house discussions to match former clients to the research criterion cited in Appendix A. As well, the staff stated an aim to find three diverse families for participation in the research. This added initiative by the transition house staff matched well with Grounded Theory's recommendation for variability of characteristics in the population to be studied.

As well, one staff person was assigned the task of initiating contact with each family to request consent for participation. Once permission from all family members had been obtained, the transition house staff-person contacted me with the names and phone numbers. I then initiated contact with the mothers via telephone to answer any further questions about the research process and to arrange a meeting time and place.

Initial Contact with Family

All initial meetings with the families were at the transition house. Coffee, juice and snacks were available during the meeting. Each family member present was given an eight page document containing the Participant Informed Consent (Appendix B) and Contact Information for Families (Appendix D). I read and explained each portion of the eight page document to ensure understanding by all family members.

All family members were invited to participate at a level that was comfortable for them. They were offered full participation, partial participation, reflection team participation, observer participation, or non-participant. I also explained that should only one member of a family wish to fully participate, this decision would be honoured. Every effort was made to accommodate the comfort level of the participating family.

I facilitated consensual family support for all participation decisions. Simply stated, this meant that individual participants decided their level of participation in the research process. There was an invitation to honour each family member's decision so that a family consensus could be achieved regarding family participation. It was also noted that each family member could alter their decision before, or during, any interview. No explanations would be required for their decision. All family members were asked to sign the consent form as well as circle the yes or no beside their name to denote their decision to take part or not.

Data Collection Method

This research involved in-depth family interviews with three families consisting of children and their mothers. In total, four Mothers were contacted. One Mother declined participation because she would have been required to ask permission of her male partner who shared dual custody of the children. It should be noted that women requiring

permission from violent fathers with whom they shared custody were not considered for this research due to the vulnerability of the mothers. As well, I was not comfortable with dismissing legal decisions pertaining to parental rights. Therefore, the three families participating in this study contained mothers who were the primary custodians of their children, although they had experienced various legal interventions before receiving their current status.

The three Mother participants were between age thirty-six and forty-three. The nine children participants were between age eight and twenty. There were four females and five males. One child participant was the girlfriend of one of the sons. The family requested that we include her in the interviews. All the other child participants were the biological children of one or another of the three participating mothers. One family excluded a younger sibling as the mother felt the child was too young to be interviewed on the subject of dad violence. An adult sibling, who lived apart from another of the three families, was excluded as well. Two of the nine child participants were not living in the family home at the time of the interviews. One of the nine children began the interviews while living at home but was moved into care before the final interview.

Interviews

All of the participants remained as full participants in the research. In one family, two siblings requested to be interviewed separately. All other participants were interviewed in family groups. The participants decided to be paid at the end of each meeting.

Each family expected to participate in four meetings. These meetings were to be labelled: Initial meeting and consent (.0); Background Questions (.1); Awareness Questions (.2); and Final Meeting (.3). Cardinal numbers were given to each family in

accordance with their placement in the interviewing process. Stated simply this means that the first family interviewed was Family 1, the second family interviewed was Family 2, and the third family interviewed was Family 3. This labelling process allowed me to easily assign notations during analysis. For example, a notation of “1.0” would signify Family 1's initial meeting with the researcher, and a notation of “2.2” would signify Family 2's interview of Awareness Questions.

The first meeting (1.0, 2.0, 3.0) with each family was explained above in the *Initial Contact with Family*. The second meeting (1.1, 2.1, 3.1) was audiotaped. I questioned the family about their current and past family contexts (see Appendix E). This interview sought to understand the family support systems; the past and current relationship with the “father”; the length of time in relationship with the violent father; how the violence was stopped; the current safety of the family; and an explanation and assignment of a Family Pathway. [A Family Pathway is a pictorial depiction of their places of births, homes, friends, family, schools, etc, in a linear path from birth to present].

The third meeting (1.2, 2.2, 3.2) contained the questions specifically addressing the research question. Due to the researcher's experience in this area, discussion did not begin at the place where “interviews usually consist of open-ended conversations during which respondents are allowed to talk with no imposed limitations of time” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.75). Rather, discussion began “later, when interviews and observations are directed by the emerging theory, [I] can ask direct questions” (p.76). This interview was audio-taped. Questions pertained to the family's awareness of the impact of exposure to father violence toward mother on children; where this awareness came from; how this awareness is storied in their lives; what helped or hindered this awareness; the father's

awareness; changes that occurred due to this awareness; and what they think is important for others to know (see Appendix F).

The fourth meeting (1.3, 2.3, 3.3) was my presentation of the core category, subcategories, properties of the categories, and properties of the properties, as they emerged from the data collected. Participants were invited into a roundtable discussion to offer rewritings, additions and deletions. Pizza was delivered and juice was available. Before leaving all participants were asked to complete an evaluation (see Appendix G). The evaluations were only used to ensure that all participants could express any further thoughts or feelings about the research process.

A total of fifteen meetings were held with the three families. Family 1 met with me five times, Family 2 met with me three times, and Family 3 met with me seven times. Ideally, each family would have met with me four times. However, when the end portion of Family 1's Awareness Questions (1.2) were lost, another interview (1.25) was added. As well, Family 2 completed 2.0 and 2.1 together, so their total number of sessions was three. The third family met together for their first meeting (3.0), and then requested that all other meetings be segregated. Therefore, I met with members of the third family a total of seven times. Of the fifteen meetings, eight were held in the family home, four were held at the transition house, and three were held in a Children Who Witness Abuse house. All meetings were held to a two-hour maximum, excluding de-briefing times. I remained available to the family for as long as the family wished to continue debriefing.

A total of six audio-tapes were compiled. These were 1.1 (Background questions with Family 1); 1.2 (Awareness Questions with Family 1); 1.25 (additional interview with Family 1, to recapture lost data); 2.2 (Awareness Questions with Family 2); 3.2A

and 3.2B (Awareness Questions with Family 3, where siblings requested separation from each other). Tapes 2.1 and 3.1 (Background Questions with Family 2 and Family 3 were lost due to my errors with audio equipment).

Transcriptions

The first set of meetings (.0, .1, .2) with the three families was completed over a two-month period. After each interview I responded in a reflective journal. As well, review notes and memos were created from the audio-taped interviews and this information directed future interviews. I initially made a conscious decision to complete the first set of interviews of all three families as one field sample. The final meeting with families would be completed after analysis was completed. However, a deepened perspective occurred after I re-read Glaser, Strauss, and Corbin (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Stauss and Corbin, 1998; Glaser, 1978; Glaser, 1992). The second reading expanded understanding of Grounded Theory to enable construction of a process that would satisfy a quest to experience Grounded Theory methodology in the fullest possible way. Therefore, at this point, the research interviews were reorganized into family sets of interviews. This restructuring of my collected data is addressed in Grounded Theory: "working with already collected data is no different from doing secondary analysis on one's own data" (1998, p. 280).

Glaser and Strauss's "[theoretical sampling] uses choices] of informants, episodes, and interactions that are driven by a conceptual question, not by a concern for 'representativeness'" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.29). "Theoretical sampling is done in order to discover categories and their properties, and to suggest the interrelationships into a theory" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.62). Grounded Theory is not concerned with

verification of existing theory or generality of scope. "In theory building, the analyst aims for density" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 158).

By "density," we mean that all (within reason) the salient properties and dimensions of a category have been identified, thereby building in variation, giving a category precision, and increasing the explanatory power of the theory.
(p. 158)

Microanalysis was used with the Family 1 data set (1.1, 1.2, 1.25) [to generate initial categories and to discover the relationships among concepts] (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 57). The Family 2, and Family 3 data sets (2.2, 3.2A, 3.2B) were "focused on filling out [the category] and verifying relationships" (p. 70).

Analysis of Data

Joint collection, coding, and analysis of data, is the underlying operation. The generation of theory, coupled with the notion of theory as process, requires that all three operations be done together as much as possible. They should blur and intertwine continually, from the beginning of an investigation to its end.
(Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.43)

In Grounded Theory "the analyst must do [her] own coding (Glaser, 1978, p.58).

The sources of data in this research study were: (a) audio-taped interviews; (b) transcriptions from the audio-taped interviews; (c) Family Pathways; (d) my field notes following contact with participants; (e) participants reflections on my writings, (f) memos generated during the research study; and (g) conversations and personal reflections with others related and unrelated to this research.

Throughout the research process a journal of field notes and personal reflections and reactions enabled me to track the evolutionary process of the research. All meetings were noted and reflected. Audio-taped interviews were reviewed as soon as possible after each interview. Responses to the interviews altered and guided changes in each successive interview.

Transcription creation evolved into simply typing the words using periods, commas, a dot series for pauses, and exclamation points. Repeated audio reviews of all completed interviews enabled a connection between my reading and audio/visual recall. It was a wonderful learning experience that left me with a definite bias toward using a multi-sensory evolution to the typed words. I learned to consistently paraphrase during the interviews, reflect on the interview process immediately after each interview, journal key reflections before audio review, audio review interviews as soon as possible while creating memos, transcribe audio-tapes while coding and creating memos, and finally, complete a microanalysis of the typed transcriptions. I believe this type of interconnection from the initial dialogue through to the typed transcription creates a very different perception of the typed transcriptions than if assistance is sought for the transcription process.

The coding system I used was simply an extension of the coding used to label the interviews. Page and line numbers were used on the transcriptions. And periods were placed between each coding function to allow visual ease in reading the code. Tracking codes to transcriptions became simple reading. For example, [1.2.p.32.1.5] would correspond to Family 1's Awareness Questions (1.2), page thirty-two (p.32), line five (1.5).

The line by line approach forces the analyst to verify and saturate categories, minimizes missing an important category, produces a dense rich theory and gives a feeling that nothing has been left out.

(Glaser, 1978, p. 58)

Ideally, transcription creation and microanalysis would occur between each interview. However, due to my inexperience, the common error of "getting caught up in this situation and not [being] able to stop the stream of interviews" (Strauss & Corbin,

1998, p. 294) occurred. As reassurance to new researchers Strauss and Corbin state, “nevertheless, the researcher should be able to come up with a competent and coherent theoretical formulation about a topic, even from previously collected data” (p. 288).

This research used Glaser’s recommended set of questions for “fracturing of data into analytic pieces which can then be raised to a conceptual level” (Glaser, 1978, p. 56). The three questions, shown in Table 1, “keep the analyst theoretically sensitive and transcending when analyzing, collecting and coding [her] data” (p. 57).

Table 1.

Questions of the Data Recommended by Glaser

-
1. What is this data a study of?
 2. What category or property of a category, of what part of the emerging theory, does this incident indicate?
 3. What is actually happening in the data?
-

The codes will just occur in the analyst’s head as [she] immerses [herself] in the data by going from incident to incident. And if [she] has the patience and trust to allow emergence, the code will slowly become relevant and fit and will begin to work and eventually saturate!

(Glaser, 1992, p. 45)

Memo writing is an ongoing task that occurs alongside the coding process and continues throughout all aspects of the analysis. I used large white recipe cards to record raw data memos, theoretical memos and housekeeping memos. All memos were dated

and coded. In Grounded Theory it is necessary to note where a memo originates. All memos were, therefore, traceable to their raw data source.

“Memos are the theorizing write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst while coding” (Glaser, 1978, p. 83). Concepts and their properties emerged through the constant comparisons between, among, and through the coded data. A naturalistic gathering of relational properties sorted the memos into categories by “similarities, connections, and conceptual orderings” (p. 117). A core category became evident through pursuing a relational lens on these categories. I retained in vivo words and phrases whenever possible to ensure that the categories and their properties retained their grounding in the emerging theory.

The initial frame of core category, subcategories, properties, and properties of the properties were created into a document for Family 1 to edit and revise. The family offered a wonderful critique of the document through in-depth comments, ideas for alterations, and additions to the created categories. This interview was not audio-taped and all changes were written onto the initial document. I explained the process would be repeated by the two other families, and that final approval would be requested through another critique of the final findings.

Family 1 approved the document and the process cycled into data collected with Family 2. It is important to note that alterations and additions to the framed document were *always* created from a sorting of all the memos. At times I would forget this process and attempt to alter the document according to the new memos created. This simply did not work. The flow of change needed to occur *from* the sorted memos *to* the created document in order to retain the interconnectedness between, among, and through the data.

I discovered, in the second cycle, that it was not the addition of new memos that necessitated the alterations to the document. Rather, the cycling process opened up an expanded perception of the data. Relationships missed in the original analysis were now perceived within the frame. This required shift is expected and predicted by Glaser:

...a theoretical integration will fall apart to some degree. This is distressing. However, it is usually in the service of allowing a better reintegration to emerge. It will soon be coming, provided that the analyst keeps sorting to reintegrate, along with resorting memos already sorted but no longer in the right place.
(1978, p. 119)

The meeting with Family 2 met with few alterations but several additions to the reformed document. Family 2 also offered very positive and insightful comments about the document. Family 3's analysis required the same cycling as Family 2's. Their critique resulted in very few changes to the document. As with the other two families, Family 3 was very curious and responsive to the document presented to them.

Therefore, Family 1's analysis created the initial frame of reference. The second and third cycling brought forth possibilities of saturation and thickening of the subcategories and their properties.

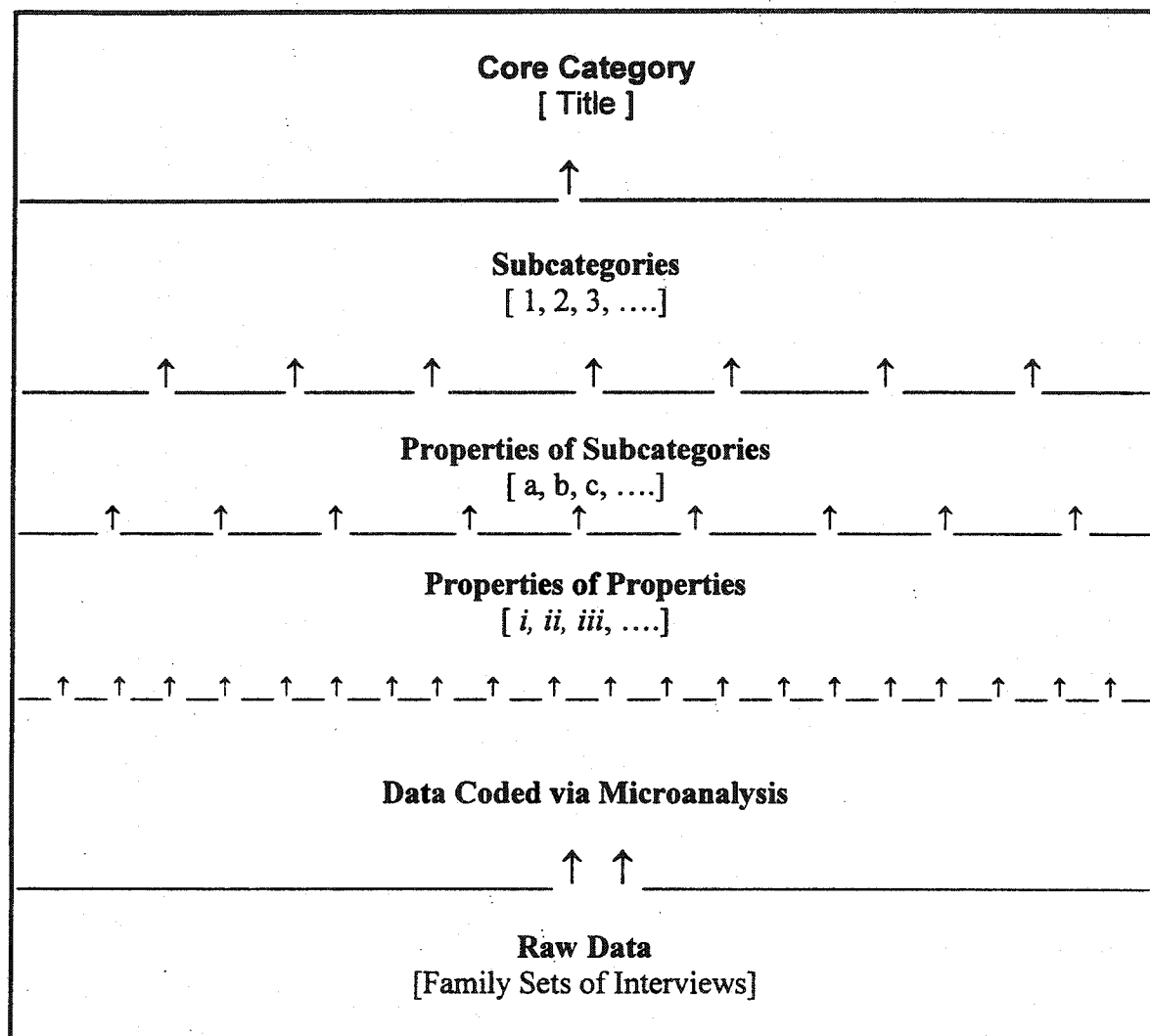
CHAPTER FOUR

GROUNDED THEORY ANALYSIS

“...in grounded theory the analyst just keeps coding and comparing many incidents until [what is most striking] emerges and then says this is what the participants consider their main concern over and over again.”

(Glaser, 1992, p. 78)

Figure 1. Retrospective Flow Chart of the Grounded Theory Process.



My frame for the final outline (Appendix H) emerged from the process described in Chapter Three. I created a retrospective flow chart to illustrate how the research process moved from inception to endpoint (Figure 1, above).

In grounded theory, “as the memos sort themselves out, the outline for writing emerges and the analyst just follows it” (Glaser, 1992, p. 113). Constant comparisons are “systematically and purposely focused” (p. 85) as patterns in the data emerge and bring forth an apparent outline. Although the tertiary documents are presented as convention suggests—main categories to specific details—it is essential to remember that it was the analysis from the raw data to the core category that created the outline.

My goal for this research was to remain within the substantiated area of focus, *awareness*. As stated in Chapter One, my intention was to bring forth the voices of children and their mothers at a very specific focal point. Substantive grounded theory remains “faithful to the empirical situation”. (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 33). As well, this intentional relationship between the research and all participants in the study—myself included—was, also, a match between my hope for this research and a predicted outcome suggested by Glaser and Strauss:

Grounded substantive theory, therefore, can give participants in a situation a broader guide to what they already tend to do, and perhaps help them to be more effective in doing it.

(p. 247)

A one-page synopsis (Table 2, below) was compiled as a visual aid to delineate the title, headings, and subheadings. It is offered here to demark the merging points between Figure 2 and Appendix H. The extensive work to bring forth these specific delineations regarding the participant’s awareness and knowledge of their experience with dad violence is reflected, further, in the retention of their voices in the analytical explanations that follow Table 2.

Table 2

One Page Synopsis of the Final Outline Presented to Participants

Core Category—A Very Bumpy Road

<i>Subcategory</i>	<i>Properties of Subcategory</i>
Introduction: Agreeing to Participate in Family Interviews about Dad Violence (DV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An opportunity to talk and remember • “How long” and when” are tough questions • Misunderstandings and assumptions • Finding contradictions between others and within self • New information to process • Reopening traumatic memories
What is DV?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is Dad? • Violence happening to Mom • Violence happening to children • Violence happening to others
First Responses to DV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dad’s response • Mom’s response • Children’s response • Extended Family and Friends Witness and Respond to DV
Legal/Outside interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mom initiated • Dad initiated • Vicious cycle • Nothing changes • Separation from Mom
We are in Recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living a different kind of life • Dad is not around • Not really in the past • Finding places to talk and to heal • Hope—Life is good

A Very Bumpy Road

The core category, *A Very Bumpy Road*, **F1D2**, [refer to Table 3 for coding system], is an in vivo phrase of a child participant describing her *Pathway*. The first four subcategories are obvious groupings that form from the sorting process. The final subcategory, *We are in Recovery*, **F1M**, is a phrase of a mother participant describing her current difficulty with her family of origin and the violent father during access visits. Please note that the flow of the analytical explanations follow the flow of Table 1, and, more specifically, Appendix H.

Table 3, below, defines the coding system used to distinguish family members in the participant comments cited in this chapter. As illustrated in the boldface examples above, the coding system distinguishes between the three families participating in this research, the gender and role of the participants, and the birth order of the children. As well, each quotation cited is a chosen representative of the sub-category and/or property it illustrates.

Table 3

Explanation of Coding System used to Distinguish Child/Mother, Birth Order of Children, and Gender of Children

<i>Family Code</i>	<i>Role Code</i>	<i>Birth Order Code</i>
F1 = Family 1	M = mom	1 = oldest child participant
F2 = Family 2	D = daughter	2 = 2 nd oldest child participant
F3 = Family 3	S = son	3 = 3 rd oldest child participant

Introduction: Agreeing to Participate in Family Interviews about Dad Violence (DV)

Within the first subcategory, Introduction: Agreeing to Participate in Family Interviews about Dad Violence (DV), there are six properties: an opportunity to talk and remember; “how long” and “when” are tough questions; misunderstandings and assumptions; finding contradictions between others and within self; new information to process; and reopening traumatic memories.

An opportunity to talk and remember

The participants in this research respond to the meetings and interviews as an opportunity to talk about their current knowledge of their past. One mother states that *being ready* is a key element for her (F2M). She now believes that the counselling intervention she received before she was ready was *wasted*.

The children, also, enjoy speaking on their own behalf during this research process. One child responds to a request for feedback about any residual feelings from the interview process with, *No, I just liked drawing this [her Pathway]*, (F1D2). As well, when corrected by other family members around differing memories, the children often counter with expressions like, *Well, let me explain it*, (F1D2), or, *I have a better memory than you*, (F1D3).

At times, the families use the interview as a safe place to question other family members about their differing experiences:

F2S2: *No. Why? Just so they think that you're like come from a fucked up family and...*

F2S1: *You did. No. But you gotta let it out. You gotta talk to somebody.*

F2S2: *Yeah. But why would you want to tell your friends?*

F2M: *Did you discuss it at Prima when you stayed at Prima?*

F2S1: *Any counsellors?*

F2S2: *I don't think so. Not that I remember.*

This is also a time to collate the independent memories into an acknowledgement of a time they all remember:

F1D2: It was a green house thing.

F1S1: a two storey.

F1D2: We lived on the top. And there was people always in the, um, across the street, who were always drunk and everything.

F1D3: And they walked in our house without asking.

F1D2: Yeah, there was that one time. I don't know what it was for.

I am very cognizant of family members using this interview time to relay information to other family members in a safe way. They accomplish this by directing their comments to me, or engaging family members directly. At times I am forgotten in the family discussions—as the comments above illustrate.

“How long” and “when” are tough questions

Questions relating to the establishment of a length of time or a specific time require reconstructive negotiation between family members. Creating a linear pathway from “mom meeting dad” to the current date is not possible for any of the three families. Although I do spend a great deal of time with Family 1 attempting to construct a dated linear pathway, all family pathways remain evolving constructions and are incomplete at the end of the research.

F1D2: We lived with our, with the whole family kind of thing, in a house onum, uh [street name]Hmmm. Not very long. Probably, months maybe. Not longer than a year I don't think....

F1S1: Yeah, he lived with us for a year.

F1M: I don't think he was living with us at that time. He just came to visit you guys.

F1D2: But he stayed with us for a long time I remember.

Researcher: Was he there a lot?

F1S1: Yup.

Misunderstandings and assumptions

As well, I need to learn to ask very specific questions, as various family combinations are present in the responses. A question with regard to the family has many differing interpretations. For example: *We lived with our dad a year or so...but mostly just always together, (F1D2)*. In the first of these two sentences the child is referring to the two biological children of the dad. In the second sentence the child is referring to all three siblings and mom.

Finding contradictions between others and within self

Memories are *fuzzy, blurry*, and replete with contradictions between family members as well as within each participant's own memory construct. The research questions bring forth an awareness of this lack of clarity within, among, and between each memory fragment. *This was all blurry until...and, That's how it kinda went, anyways, (F1D2)*, are examples of the participants acknowledgements of their difficulty in answering some questions with clarity.

During the research process all of the participants become aware how their memories differ from other family members.

F2D3: He had a knife, right?

F2M: I don't think he had a knife that day. Because he kicked me.

F2D3: I remember a knife!

There are, also, occasions where a child has no memory of an incident as the other family members discuss it. As one child states, *I have never seen my dad hit my mom in my whole life, (F1S1)*.

New information to process

The research process, also, presents new insights to family members. As family members respond to questions, in turn, differing aspects from each participant thicken the common knowledge of the past. The discussion enables family members to piece together answers they had not previously been able to understand. As one child states, *Actually I wondered and then realized—for our safety, (F1S1).*

During one family member's disclosure of an incident the other family members are, at times, hearing this information for the first time. Therefore, interruptions occur, either to express surprise or to seek clarification of the incident.

F2S2: Holy crap!

F2M: That scared me. I was terrified.

F2S2: Were you possessed or something?

Reopening traumatic memories

The beginning of each interview is used to discuss feelings and reactions to previous interviews. At times, there are personal, unrelated issues to discuss prior to beginning the interview process. Children bring their current feelings and problems into the room with them. Therefore, any current complaints with others in the room would also be brought forward as we gathered for the interview. As this is not an easy process to complete, time is spent in orienting the participants before beginning the interview. At this time of reflection, several children mention observing their mother's emotional response for several days after the interviews. As one mother and child respond:

Researcher: Did you have left-over things from last session?

F1M: No. I was just.....a little bit..... upsetting....I found it. Not upsetting in the way that was angry, but when you relive it—traumatic things—you get.....like you kind of buried.....you kind of, um, I don't know.....relive it again.

F1S1: Flashback.

In the final interviews with each family, participants begin to recount memories that are not available prior to the research interviews. A child who does not have any good memories of living with dad speaks of a recovered happy memory. As well, another child who has difficulty recounting any negative aspects involving the violent father tells of a memory, from young childhood, of running away when dad would become enraged. This child, also, recalls, at this time, a memory of dad harming a family pet.

The content of the interviews in this research is extremely emotional for everyone in the room. There is an ever-present potential for each participant to feel their past trauma again. Seemingly simple questions elicit responses with high emotional distress.

Researcher: Have you talked to anybody?

F2D3: With my friend, [name].

Researcher: With your friend, [name].

F2D3: Yeah. And then she didn't like me anymore.

Reactions to the emotionally laden responses vary. The child, above, recounts her experience very quietly. The child, below, stands up and moves around the room.

F2S1: I guess not then. I didn't bring it out. It's sorta something I kinda keep to myself. I might have mentioned that I had the shit kicked out of me when I was, uh, (got up and moved away from microphone, then returned). I don't remember who to or to, uh, or why I would say it. But I don't remember actually sitting down and discussing the whole matter with somebody.

Disclosure and discussion of the traumatic times in their lives produce an entry point to express past grief as well as a place to express their concern and caring for each other.

F2M: But I do think that you had a lot of hatred towards me when we were going through that too. Because I found a note in your bedroom that said, "I hate my mom, and I hate [dad]. So I think...

F2S1: But those feelings weren't directed at you. They were probably just directed at the circumstances....

F2M: It was written in blood. His own blood. It was on a little scrap of paper that I found in his closet.... And that scared me.

What is Dad Violence (DV)?

Within the second subcategory, What is Dad Violence (DV)?, there are four properties: who is dad?; violence happening to mom; violence happening to children; and violence happening to others.

Who is dad?

There are five violent dads identified in this research: one dad who is deceased; one dad who is not the biological father of any of the child participants, and therefore has no legal access to the children; one dad who is the biological father to one child (a non-participant in this research) and has limited access to his child, but no access to the child participants; one dad who is the biological father to two children and has limited access to all three children in the family; and one dad who is the biological father to two child participants but has no current access.

Violence happening to mom

All participants agree that mom is the primary target of dad's violence. A mother and daughter explain:

F2D3: ...So I just sat there and listened to the pounding on the door. And then, [dad] started coming up the stairs. Cause he climbed in through the window
F2M: Anyways, then [dad] started pushing me and threw me downstairs.

The participants cite the following examples of violence against mom: terrorized, threatened, stalked, controlled, kicked, punched in the head, lifted off chair by hair, arguments escalated to throwing objects, and fists.

Violence happening to children

One child speaks of remaining on the outer parameters of the violence, watching and listening:

F1D2: I had lots of concern. Because, as Mom said, [F1S1 and F1D3] they'd run in there, and they would like, they'd try to break them up. And I remember [F1D3] she used to bite my dad, and she used to jump on him. And he, like, tried to throw her off. And I was like, you know, I, I like, tried to stay back and I was freaking out.

The children do not seem to differentiate an awareness of harm to self from harm to mom. I am unable to create any differentiation between the emotional harm of witnessing violence against their mom and their concern for their mom. The children continuously express concern for their mom first, and themselves second. It does not seem to make sense to the children to speak of the harm of witnessing as something separate from harm to their moms: *I don't know. I just thought it was harmful for them. And I wanted them to stop. I didn't really think about myself, (F1D2).*

When children speak of their interventions to help mom they also speak of becoming targets of dad's rage as well:

F2D3: It was because I was, like, watching. And then mom told me to run—out to the people across the street. I went to go out the door and he grabbed my hair and threw me into the closet door.

At times the children speak of becoming the recipients of dad's rage as he uses harm to them as a means to hurt mom. One mother and son speak of the theft of the son's car as something the boyfriend did because he knew it would hurt mom.

As well, three of the four biological children speak of their terror of dad's rage in acts directed specifically at them, and unrelated to the abuse to their mom. The children did not talk about the specific reasons for their dad's anger toward them. They did appear to associate dad's anger with being disciplined.

Biological children and stepchildren speak of having different relationships with dad:

F1S1: But one day he dropped by for like three or four days and he spent six hundred dollars on me and [F1D2] in two days.

F1D3: Uh hum. He didn't spend any money on me.

In all three families there is a belief that the biological children are not as vulnerable to dad's violence as the stepchildren. There are several examples of the stepchildren being physically abused by their dads. In one example, the youngest sibling is considered safe around her biological dad even though he has been convicted of physical assault against one of his stepchildren: *Mom: [F2D4, non-participant] hasn't seen any of that. Soand he's very loving towards her.*

In one family the mother speaks of her children's disclosure of sexual abuse by their biological father.

F3M: So, yeah, they put a parenting homemaker in my home. And I found that very helpful.....And then when it was apparent that there was behaviours when they were coming back from weekends...that were totally inappropriate...that um, talking to the homemaker—decided to get them into art and play therapy. That there was something going on.

Violence happening to others

Two of the moms speak of initially interpreting their partner's violence toward others as mistaken and supporting dad in his fight for justice. In one instance the mom speaks of helping her partner locate an ex-wife in order to serve custody and access papers for his child. In another instance a mom speaks of returning to her partner when her sister charged him with sexual assault.

F1M: ...Um, I don't know...I guess I felt guilty because, um, I had left him when I was pregnant with [F1D2] and he had started drinking and using drugs quite heavily after I left.....It was really a hard time for us. So I moved the kids back. So that, um, they could see their dad in jail. So we could go to the prison every weekend.

Two of the child participants speak of times where their dad became enraged with, and kicked, the family pets. One animal, a puppy, is remembered as then bleeding from its mouth.

Two of the families recall instances where objects in the house were used to express uncontrolled anger. In one family the children speak of their parents throwing the objects at each other. In another family the children speak of the dad destroying objects out of rage. As well, one mom recalls her decision to leave as coming from her realization of how unsafe the family was because of unsafe wiring in the house.

F1M: He had started growing marijuana in the basement and this bulb he had caught on fire.....And he wasn't even concerned about me or the kids....and all the windows were painted shut upstairs or nailed shut.... 'Cause there was no way we could have got out.

First Responses to Dad Violence (DV)

Within the third subcategory, First Responses to DV, there are four properties: dad's response, mom's response, children's response, and extended family and friends witness and respond to DV.

Dad's response

The children speak of being very aware of their lack of safety during the violent episodes. Their memory of dad's expectation for children was that they should not attempt any intervention: *I just think that he just wanted us to stay out of it. And just him and her fight, (F1D2).*

The moms speak of experiencing great difficulty in forcing the violent dad out of their lives. Even when the fathers seem to accept being forced to leave, their alternative place of residence is not thought of as anything permanent.

F1D2: I think he just gets into a relationship because he doesn't have anywhere to go. Or he says sometimes that they pick him. You know. I don't know.

During access visits the children speak of their dad using the time with them to initiate the idea of reconciliation of the family. All three moms recount incidents where the dad uses his charm as a way back into their lives. Two of the moms speak of continuing to struggle with these feelings of vulnerability. As well, one child recounts:

F1D2: Yeah, um, my dad, when he was here, he told me that he wants to get along. He wants to have a family. And he was thinking of, like, making a house and everything. He's gotten better than before. But...and...I don't see how...I couldn't really live with him.

Participants do not think that the dads demonstrate any responsibility for their violence against their partners. As one child states: *Not...not to Mom. He doesn't apologize, (F1S1).* The moms speak only of a belief that when a dad is violent, it is the mom's responsibility to protect the children from that violence. Two of the moms speak of dad's breaking into the house. As well, all three families speak of feeling that reporting the violence resulted in a very negative impact to their family:

F2M: And that's how it felt. Is --the kids got taken away because [dad] beat me up. And that's...and then [dad] came back and kicked in the doors and they came and took the kids away again.

All the moms speak of experiencing threats from the dad around losing their children if they left. One mom remembers the dad using reports to the ministry as an attempt to gain custody of the children. Another mom recalls returning to Prince George when the dad applied for custody of the children:

F1M: ...cause we had moved down to Vancouver, and he was trying to gain dual custody. And, um, I had to come back three months later for the court date.

Three biological fathers of the child participants applied for custody and access to their children and were originally given visitation. Of these three, one dad currently has no legal access, and the other two have retained their visitation.

Mom's response

The incident, below, is originally recounted by a child participant as an example of wanting to be with his dad but prevented by mom.

F1S1: ...my mom just came in and one time it was like, pushed his head down and just about hit his face on the pan. And then she was, like, started beating on him for nothing. And she tried to hit him with the frying pan, and that's when he got mad and just started yelling at her and stuff. And then he left.

In a later interview, the family remembers this incident as a time when the son and dad violated a restraining order by sneaking dad into the house. Mom's reaction, at that time, was to physically force dad to leave.

The mothers speak of their awareness of normalizing the violence:

F2M: I used to say to myself, "well, you weren't as bad as [name]. She had her arms broken and she had her jaw broken and I never suffered any of that. So it was, like, well, you're really not... it's not that bad for you.

The accepted level of violence within all three families is noticeably higher than mine.

And, although I define my stance during the initial meeting with the families, this difference remains a source of discomfort between the families and myself. The difference between the current level of violence in the family and their past level is vast. However, the difference between the current level of violence in the family and my level of tolerance is also very noticeable. During one interview, a child notices and explains to me:

F1D2: And um, the only thing is, like, my dad has a temper. And, um, and sometimes I'm a little sensitive. That kind of thing. But it's way better than it was before. Okay?

Researcher: Okay.

F1D2: Yup.

The children recall times when mom would call out to them for help, as cited previously. As well, the moms are well aware of their need of help from others. Dad's violence toward them remains unchecked, even to date, without outside intervention. One mom speaks of police intervention during one of the moves:

F1M: Cause I remember we got a u-haul and the kids' dad tried to stop me. So the police were there as we were moving stuff into the u-haul.

All three moms speak of using moving as a means to distance themselves from the violence. They recall their need to secretly plan and pack without stated preparation to any others except special confidantes. As well, they remember many of their moves as total disconnections from the current community. One child speaks of the moves: *Yeah. It was so sudden. The day my mom wanted to move was the day we moved, (F3S1).*

Therefore, severance from school and friends happens without warning, and without any good-byes.

There are examples, in one family, where mom is able to force dad to leave. She states that once the threat of police intervention was established she felt that she could persuade dad to leave without actually calling the authorities. One of her children remembers:

F1D2: So she kicked him out and he lived in the park. There was a park somewhere. So he lived in the park for a few days.

The mom's current support of the violent dads varies between the three families. Two of the mothers are very strong advocates of the dad having visitation of his biological children. One of these two mothers includes a stepchild in the visitation as well. The other mother acknowledges her children's continuing anger at the step-dad but

insists on retaining contact with the dad so that her youngest child will have contact with her father. The third mother totally opposes any contact between the dad and children due to the sexual abuse. This mother recalls memories of supporting dad and his way of recounting a story:

F3M: Cause he had told me stories about his other ex-wife. That he was thrown in jail once for assault. But he didn't assault her. Um, and at the time I believed him.

However, as the interviews progress another mom moves away from one way of thinking about dad to a way that now makes more sense to her.

F1M: And see I've always felt that it's my responsibility because he doesn't see the kids, um, just sporadically—that it's up to me to, um, move aside and let him come over—come into my house. And I'm setting myself up to the violence.

The moms in this research speak of being told that they are responsible for maintaining the safety of the children. The idea of supportive intervention to stop the dad violence is not something they recall in their experiences. One mom states that the ministry has told her that if she allows the father access to his children, the children will be apprehended from her care. Another mom believes that her inability to prevent the dads from breaking into the house left her accountable for the lack of safety in the home. She explains how she is responsible for the enforcement of restraining orders:

F2M: I was the only one there that was capable enough to go to the police and say, look, they're here at my house. Come and take them away. And I didn't do that. And it was my own responsibility.

I question this mom's statement of responsibility and uncover several examples of dad's breaking into the house:

Researcher: But if you had stopped them at the door what would have happened? Would they have broken in? Would they have gotten angry?

F2M: Well, with [dad] that happened. He came in through the kitchen window.

All three of the moms speak of their suspicion, at the time of the violence, that the violence was wrong and excessive to their blamed behavior. However, the moms also speak in a manner that acknowledges some responsibility for the violence that happened to them.

F1M: But he made it sound like—he always makes me feel guilty about my sister putting him in jail and its my, you know, responsibility to help him out of his life style....And he has a way of making me feel that I owe him.

One mom speaks of responding to the violent attacks by remaining motionless and not reacting to the violence. She remembers one incident when the dad had entered the home and immediately punched her very hard in the ear. Her ears continued to ring for days. She remembers asking him why he hit her and him stating that she had not completed some task he had told her to do. She states, as well, that when she did attempt to hit him back during a violent episode, she was laughed at, and told she had *chicken arms*, (F2M).

Moms state that they were aware of the disrespect and emotional abuse toward the children. But their behavior and awareness altered when the children began to be harmed by dad's violence.

F2M: But then, I think, when he became physically abusive to them, that's when it changed.

The moms' state that their awareness of the children's presence did not seem to appear until the children became involved in the violence themselves. As one Mom states: *And you just have, like she said, these blinders, and you don't see the kids unless they're right there*, (F1M). One mother recalls that when the children became involved she would stop defending herself and retreat to the bathroom to lock herself in or call the police. However, the other two mothers are keenly aware that they did not intervene even

when they became aware of the physical harm to their children. One mother openly acknowledges her inability to end her relationship with the violent dad. The other mother compares her own abuse as a child to her husband's abuse of her oldest child [non-participant in research]: *Because I had grown up with an abusive stepfather. So I just thought this was normal. It's not normal. It took a long time, (F3M).*

Children's response

As cited previously, the children are well aware of their level of concern for their mom. Two of the girl participants remember responding by watching and sometimes shouting, but not becoming physically involved: *And a lot of times, [F1D2] would kind of watch from a distance and yell at her dad and me, (F1M).* Or, similarly, a child states: *she (F2D3) just kinda cries. Stays there and watches and kinda "ah, ah, ah", (F2S2).*

Several of the child participants speak of their interventions to help their mom. They state that their response is not related to any conscious decision. Rather, it is an uncontrolled reaction that would overcome them:

F2S2: But that feeling is like for a second and then it instantly goes to rage. It's like shock for a second. Like how could you do that? And then it just turns to rage.

It is interesting to note that two of the children who intervened have no memory of their dad throwing them off:

F1D3: I don't remember any of that. I remember I'd try and bite him and stuff. But I don't remember him trying to throw me off.
F1D2: 'Cause, really, when he's mad at my mom...
F1D3: I don't remember that!

Children also recount a heightened sensitivity to sounds in the house. As one child states: *Whenever I heard something break I'd wake up, and I'd go downstairs, (F1D2).*

This could have been related to their worries about mom's safety. As this child states, further:

It's kind of just, uh, like, you don't want it to happen again, kind of thing. Like, you're always like, oh, you know, 'it's going to happen again', and...

One son states that he does not have any memories of his dad being violent toward his mom. He states his reasoning for this lack of memory:

F1S1: That's why I don't really have memories of him [being violent]. Because he'd always...he's always been there for BMX. And he always paid for me and it was like five dollars for a race each time.

There are examples of the children attempting to get help. As cited previously, these family memories also contain memories of physical assault of the children. Dad would throw them out of the way or shut them into a closet.

A few of the child participants in this study speak of discussing the violence with friends, but never with any adult except their mom: *With the friends I have now—they don't know about it. I don't talk about it anymore with my friends, (F1D2).* As well, another child states: *At my school I just totally forget about my dad. I don't think of him, (F1D3).*

The children in one of the families state they are very aware that speaking to adults results in separation from their mom—as they had been apprehended and placed in foster care soon after authorities became aware of the violence. The children in another of the three families do not recount any specific incidents to me. The mom explains that disclosures are not perceived as having a positive result. The children had been apprehended by a social worker and placed in their father's care several times after mom left the relationship.

In another of the three families, one child states that he does not like attending counselling as he feels that the result is to be labelled a *bad child*, (*F1S1*), once others know of his dad's violence. However, when I attempt to introduce it into the presentation of the findings, all the children in each of the three families refuse to allow any reference to it. All of the children identify very strongly with the *bad child* label, but I could not find a way to obtain approval to present it in the findings. They approve, instead, *Not really in the past*.

During the interviews with the two families where girl children are present, brothers would prevent sisters from responding to some questions by distracting noises, actions, or comments. In one family these distractions would silence the sister in spite of my attempts to receive further responses from her. As well, in this family I would stop the interview to state my concern and allow discussion about what is happening in the interview. One interview requires a long debriefing session when the girlfriend reacts to what she sees in the room. As well, the mother states, after this interview, a new understanding of her sons' level of violence toward her daughter. I, also, discover other instances of disruption when I review the audiotape. During audio review it becomes obvious that my questions to the female children can accompany distractions by the male siblings.

Some of the children speak of their extremely traumatic reactions to their separation from their mom. One child recalls that, while in foster care, she consistently responded to the sound of an ambulance with concern for her mom. Another child remembers doing self-harm by ripping his skin and using the blood to write on the walls of his room while in foster care.

When the researcher combines these reactions of the children under the title of *protector*, the children identify very strongly with it. They relate to the acknowledgement of their worries about their mom's safety. A mom and son cite one example:

F2M: [Dad] came to the door, and one kid with a (pellet) gun.

F2S2: Yeah, I stand there just in case, like, anything happens. I don't think I will feel too bad if I shot [dad].

My interpretation is put forward very tentatively in my final meeting with the families. And they respond by bringing forth numerous examples that illustrate the ways they protect their mom. One mom tells how her oldest son took care of the family when she was *heavily into her addiction*, (F2M), by cooking breakfast and getting the younger siblings ready for school. This son is visibly impacted by my interpretation of his behaviour, and reflects on this several times during the remainder of the presentation. The other son in the family is well known for ensuring all doors are locked.

Three of the four biological children speak of enjoying their time with their dad.

Both moms and children state the need for the children to have contact with their dad.

F1M: And then the kids will let him in, in the middle of the night or first thing in the morning or whatever. And then he's got an in. You know. So it's really hard. Because they want to see him—that's their dad.

None of the children state a belief that the violence has ended. They also do not believe that outside intervention will stop the violence. When asked about any benefit of identification, one child states:

F2S2: I think the right answer here is, "We can help stop it forever, children." And that's what they're hoping they'll say. But... (laughed)... not at all.

The children speak of their moving as something that just happened. They do not remember having any understanding, at the time, as to why it was happening.

F1D2: We didn't really think about it. We didn't really know. We just, we were just moving.

F1S1: We just went with the flow.

As well, dads are remembered as being arrested and taken away, but later return to the house for visits and/or extended times that, again, escalate into violence. When I ask if anyone talked to them about the violence they all said, "No". During all of the interviews I am continually cognizant that their memories are being discussed without the clarity of a well-formed story. Opening answers to questions are vague and sparse. It is in the discussion and interplay between the family and myself that information appears and thickens.

When I ask the children about dad violence stopping, their responses reflect an expectation that the dad violence will continue in spite of receiving intervention by outside sources:

Researcher: So for you it's that, what was it you said? That people need to know.

F2S2: That it's happening.

Researcher: Which people then? Because the neighbours didn't seem to be much help.

F2S2: I don't know. Whoever deals with this sort of stuff. I never had it dealt with.

The child, cited above, had been apprehended from his mom and lived in long term foster care. He is very aware that the violence against his mom continues during his absence from the home.

The stepchildren in this study do not state support for their stepfathers. In one family the relationship between the children and the stepfather is extremely strained, (F2S1): *But, for myself, the biggest decision that I remember making was to let go of the anger and resentment and hate for [dad].* In another family the stepchild is included in

the access visits with the biological children, but does not speak favourably about the visits.

Three of the four biological children, in this study, remember enjoying their visitation times with their dads. The other biological child states openly that he has no interest in a relationship of any kind with his dad.

The children consistently state an appreciation of the difference between the level of violence when the violent dad was in the home and the current level. One child articulates this contrast about the potential for violence:

F1D2: The fighting and everything stopped. Now is probably way less abuse than there was then. Now it's just my mom and dad can't really get along. My mom is also still taking a little bit of, you know, what happened before and putting it in concern now. And so, now she's just trying to be cautious and everything. 'Cause we still don't know what my dad could do.

Extended family and friends witness and respond to DV

Two of the three families speak of times when family and/or friends help mom move.

F1M: And then I went into the bedroom and I phoned my mom and I told her what happened. And then she, uh, her and my step dad came to pick us up.

One mom describes a time when her partner's brother was visiting and intervened on her behalf when her partner became abusive. The two brothers ended up in a fistfight and the brother left. The mom remembers being blamed for the fight.

Several children talk about making good friends once they stopped moving so often. They, also, acknowledge how important their friends are to them:

F1D2: I used to cry all the time. When we first moved here. Because life was hectic then, so....I just cried because I used to think of all the stuff that used to happen.

Researcher: But you don't do that now?

F1D2: Nope, not any more. I, well, before I didn't have that much friends. I think that's a big part. Because when you have friends you can talk to them. And, you know, tell them what's going on and stuff. So. Yeah.

Two of the moms, also, state the importance of family and friend's support. One mom recalls leaving her abusive relationship because of a friend's support. Another mom spoke of finding two good friends after joining a counselling support group during her transition house stay.

As well, two of the moms state that their close family ties with their respective families became strained during their violent relationship. In particular, they both state that their close relationship with their sisters is now totally severed.

Researcher: Who is your closest family – not including family present?

F3M: (laughs) I really don't have anybody. I have, um (begins to cry) that's close to me? ...family.... 'Cause I have a sister, but we're not on speaking terms right now.

The other mom spoke of having no family or friend's support before, during, or after her relationship with her violent partners.

Legal/Outside Interventions

Within the fourth subcategory, Legal/Outside Interventions, there are five properties: mom initiated; dad initiated; vicious cycle; nothing changes; and separation from mom.

Mom initiated

The moms recount many different attempts to stop their partner's violence. The examples they cite through the interview process are: charges, restraining orders, peace bonds, ex parte orders, entering a safe home, and placing their children in care.

The moms talk of the dads arrests, but only one mom spoke of a conviction due to the violence against her. Another dad was arrested on multiple occasions over the years,

but mom did not speak of any convictions related to these arrests. The charge and conviction against this father are for sexual assault against mom's sister. Two of the other dads have multiple arrests and convictions. One of these dads is currently in jail (reason is not recorded during this research). The deceased dad did not have any arrests or convictions.

One family told of one dad's charge against two child participants, with a conviction of assault against the older child. Although the dad had assaulted two of his stepchildren, the younger child was considered too young to be a good witness.

Moms talk of moving to a location unknown to the father or staying in a women's shelter as a way of stopping the violence toward them:

F3M: And someone had told me [a transition house]. So I had phoned from a neighboursSo when he went to the doctors I packed up the car, packed up the kids, and I was in Prince within two hours.

Dad initiated

For all three of the moms, leaving the dad meant initiation into unsupervised access, of the children, with the dad: *(F3M): ...dad wants them both. Because when I got my divorce he was granted every other holiday.*

All three of the moms spoke of times when the dad threatened to have the children taken away if they left the relationship. However, only one mom spoke of the dad actually filing a report with the ministry. The current status between this family and the ministry is that their file is closed and mom retains custody of the children. Dad is under a no contact order. This mom is, also, the only mom of the three families to return to the relationship once before terminating the relationship permanently.

Vicious cycle

Two of the moms spoke of a belief that they belong, somehow, in a rough place:

F1M: And it was a really rough area....I didn't think I belonged [anywhere nice], you know. I just thought I fit in, living in the hood. And then when you phone the police, it doesn't look so bad. Because the police are at so and so's house, two doors down, on a regular basis.

There is a memory of an instance when a roommate called 911 as a dad was breaking into the house. However, family memories of receiving help from others are scarce. The following comment is more common to their experience:

F2M: Actually, I got beat up a few times. I went to my neighbours. And, uh, I remember her saying to me, "Please don't come in the middle of the night anymore. You can come up to eleven. And if you get beat up after that don't come over... (laughs).

As stated previously, two of the moms speak of having supportive and close family ties prior to their violent relationships. Currently, though, the two moms no longer speak to their sisters. In the final meeting with one of these families I express my observation that when mom left after a violent attack by dad, her sister had stayed in the adjoining apartment. Then when her sister was attacked, mom returned to support dad, not her sister. Mom's response to my way of interpreting her experience is to smile and say, "yes". She appears to appreciate my way of speaking over her own interpretation. The third mom recalls asking her family to take her children during their apprehension by ministry. At that time her family stated they were unable to offer any help.

All moms spoke of going through the court system with regard to the custody of their children. This occurred in two families when the father filed for custody and access, and in the other family when the ministry apprehended the children. Only one mom

speaks of opposing child contact with the biological father of her children. All three moms speak of a continuing concern of possible violence during future contact:

F2M: And he's had extensive violence. He's been charged quite a few times with spousal abuse....He's probably had six charges. But they seem to...Like when I charged him he got two months. And he's had charges since I've left him and they've been dropped.

Nothing changes

As the children speak of the time of dad violence, they, also, recount a time when their school life was in turmoil. Some children tell of getting into fights: *I was just a big troublemaker. I was really short attitudes, really short temper...., (F1S1)*. Other children remember being bullied: *I was bullied quite a few times, actually because most of the kids would pick on me, (F1D2)*. During this research one of the children consistently expresses concern around her struggles with peer relationships and family members. I continue to remind this child and her family that there is support for them through the transition house staff. They make contact with the transition house and the child's distress noticeably subsides for the remaining interview.

All three woman and their children speak of a transition house stay during their attempt to be safe from dad violence. One mom states of her safe home experience:

F3M: And then they gave me some pamphlets and pages like the abuse wheel and all that kind of stuff...And I didn't realize that it was abuse—violence. So I'd have to say that the awareness really came at [a transition house].

It is interesting to note that after residing in a transition house, one family did not move for four years even though the dad was aware of their place of residence and visited often. This is recalled as a time when the children would sneak dad into the house and mom would force dad to leave or allow him to stay.

As stated previously, the children are very aware of their intense feelings during the dad violence. However, they do not correlate their relationship struggles with friends and family, or their overwhelming feelings and troublesome behaviors, with their exposure to the dad violence. Children associate their need for counselling with specific behavior problems.

F2M: I had gone away to a treatment center, the foster family phoned me and said that [F2S1] was ripping the skin off his face and his arms and writing on the walls in blood.... And I'm not sure how that was dealt with.... There was no counselling offered.

Researcher (to F2S1): Yeah. It's kind of shocking to me that no one was saying this is—look at what's happening to you. And you were trying to say it yourself but there's nobody there listening to you. And when they are it's in an anger management class.

Four of the child participants speak of attending counselling specifically for children exposed to domestic violence through the CWWA (Children Who Witness Abuse) Program. One mom spoke of requesting CWWA counselling for her children but her social worker refused consent. We spoke of her son's attendance in an anger management group.

Researcher: Did she talk to you, [F2D3]? Did you have any social workers ever talk to you? About father violence?

F2D3: No.

Researcher: No? How about you, [F2S1]?

F2S1: We had a few conversations about it. Nothing was ever done though. Suggestions of counselling, anger management. Or whatever.

Researcher: Anger management—for you?

F2S1: Yeah.

Researcher: So it was presented as you having the problem?

F2S1: Pretty much.

Researcher: So whenever they talked about the father violence against your mom...

F2S1: No. Cause usually it would be...uh...

F2D3: No. [F2S1] was an angry kid.

F2S1: Yeah. (lots of voices at once).

Separation from mom

All of the child participants in this study, except one, have been separated from their moms at some point in their lives. The exception was a stepchild of the violent father.

The children recall various reactions to separation from their mom. Two children speak fondly of living with their dads. Another child, however, did not have any good memories of living with the dad:

F1D2: There was [apartment] and I put an x through it. Because I don't like this house. This house was run down and we didn't have much supplies, like, you know, kids stuff, that we needed.

The siblings in another of the participant families spoke of their extended time in many different foster homes. Sometimes they were with their siblings and sometimes they were separated from their siblings as well as from their mom: *I wouldn't want to live in a foster home again....I didn't like it at all. Why? Away from everybody you love,* (F2S2).

In another of the families, the children spoke of their time in care as being a positive experience. One child states:

F3S2: I wanted to stay at [a group home].

Researcher: Forever and ever and ever?

F3S2: Just for about five years.

As well, some of the children recall extremely traumatic reactions to their separation from their moms. As cited previously, the reactions relate to their concern for the safety of their mom.

We are in Recovery

Within the fifth subcategory, We are in Recovery, there are five properties: living a different kind of life; dad is not around; not really in the past; finding places to talk and to heal; and hope—life is good.

Living a different kind of life

In two of the families the moms speak of completing treatment and recovery of drug and alcohol addictions. One child's comment relays an understanding of this:

F1D2: But the majority of the people who came around were, um, drunks and that. Because...and you know, like, you know...pot people and that. Cause that was a very rough time. So, um, their friends were mostly those kind of people.

All three families speak of the violent fathers' drug and alcohol abuse during the relationship. One mom comments on the dad's current addiction:

F1M: Because he's a daily pot smoker. He's very moody and, uh, he gets upset and starts swearing at me and everything. And I won't take it anymore.

In one family the mom and children speak of attending treatment together. In another family the mom talks of attending treatment while the children were in foster care.

Dad is not around

All of the moms speak of the dad's refusal to pay child support. One family speaks of the dad's expectation to stay at the mom's place of residence during his access visits. Two of the three biological fathers do not have an independent permanent address: *Well, we can only phone our grandma's—but he doesn't have a phone or his isn't located anywhere, (F1D2).*

As well, the children speak of either spending their time with dad at dad's parents or at dad's current girlfriend's residence.

F1M: ...they haven't been able to get him into court to pay child support...he doesn't have a phone number. Or he always lives with other people, so his name is never on the lease.

All of the children in this study are aware of the possibility of being exposed to violence again. As one of the children states: *You know I'm pretty sure it hasn't pretty much totally stopped yet, (F2S2).* They identify this possibility as occurring during access visits or with the mom's contact with stepfathers.

Two siblings fondly recount trips to the park and going out to dinners with their dad. They, also, speak of missing their dad. One story the siblings recount with much glee is about a time when dad spent all his time with them and not with his girlfriend—even though it was her birthday.

F1D2: Now more than ever I think, I, I really miss my dad sometimes. Because when everything started to get, like, bad... between my brother and my mom...we'd talk about it. Or we'd go somewhere. And, um, I don't know why.

One child comments that his dad is easily forgotten because he isn't the only one without a dad in the home: *Most of my friends, they live with their moms, (F1S1).*

Not really in the past.

For the most part, the children do not have words for the feelings that accompany their troublesome memories. One of the older children, however, is able to articulate these feelings:

F2S1: Somebody brings something up. This happened to me, that happened to me, or I go to training or something. Some people have gone through this, some people have gone through that and I just sort of sit there and go over everything that's happened to me in my head. And it's just, like, Geez. Sort of makes everything look bigger for me. For sure.

They are, however, able to articulate the behaviors that cause them grief. All of the children give examples of a time when their anger overwhelmed them and they had either hurt themselves, damaged something, or hurt another person.

F1D3: I'll just break something. Like something glass. I just smash it on the ground. And then my mom will get more mad at me so I go outside and then the kids always bug me because none of the kids like me or anything.

All of the children agree with the idea that there is a hierarchy of violence in their family.

F1D2: Sometimes [F1S1] will get mad at me. And um, I just, I'm sad when that happens. Because he's a lot stronger than me and tougher. So kinda brings back to when my dad. That's why I get really scared. And uh, yeah. And when I get angry it's from my sister. I don't know why we don't get along.

As well, all the participants state an awareness of the level of physical violence between siblings. In one family the level of violence is such that the siblings request separate interviews. The current lack of trust between the two siblings prohibits any desire to speak in front of each other. All three of the moms in this study express concern about the level of physical violence between their children.

While reviewing the audiotapes of the family interviews, I discover several matches between a story of the dad's violence and an example of how a child exhibits their anger.

F1M: And I was about four months pregnant with [F1D2]. And I ran into the bathroom and locked the door. And [dad] kicked and punched three big holes in the bathroom door.

....

F1S1: Oh, if I'm really angry I will punch something. Not somebody. Yeah like that door there.

F2S2: Cause yeah, I went in there and the banister's on the floor and everything's smashed everywhere.

F2M: The TV was trashed.

....
F2S2: In a blind rage. I picked up, like, a two hundred, three hundred dollar TV. Just chucked it. Just get out of here. I threw his stuff and then I went and got a knife.

Some of the children speak of their inability to keep their arguments from escalating to physical violence.

F1D2: Cause when I get angry at her (F1D3) I punch her and then she hits me. And then we, like, really start to hurt each other

F3S2: Actually, the part that hurt me more than it hurt mom and [dad] I think...when me and [F3S1] used to get in fights—[F3S1] hurt me. But sometimes I hurt him.

Every participant in this research is aware of current child problems within the family.

F1M: But see, [F1D3]'s on a waiting list to see a pediatrician...Because she has a hard problem remembering things. She has such a short attention span. And she has a problem with her anger. She acts out a lot of violence towards me and the other kids.

As well, there is an acceptance that being overly physical with each other is an intergenerational family trait. As one child states:

F1S1: Well, it's just sort of mostly family wise. Our short tempers are passed down through generation. Like my grampa has a really, really short temper. If he doesn't get some things, he'll get really mad.

Finding places to talk and to heal.

The children speak of the silence about dad violence outside their family of origin:

Researcher: But did the police talk to you—or the neighbours?

F2S1: No.

Researcher: Because when you thought about this as something's wrong here. Did you ever have people coming up and saying—what's happening to your mom is wrong?

F2S1: No.

All of the children speak of past attendance in counselling. Four of the nine child participants, and one mom, are attending counselling when the research begins. As well, two children are on waiting lists for assessment regarding their behaviour. One child speaks of her ongoing counselling:

F1D2: ...my dad, he used to yell at me and, you know...and say, don't be a whiny and everything. So, I...now when something happens to me, I just take it all in. And I, that's why I go to my group—ala-teen. And it helps me, like, to let it all out.

Her sibling, however, speaks quite differently of the same process: *Counselling doesn't work for me, (F1D3)*. One of the reasons she relays is around her feelings of being intimidated by the boys in the group.

As illustrated above, the responses to counselling are varied. Two of the moms speak of making friends during their group sessions at the transition houses. The other mom speaks of a lack of connection: *Didn't seem to get anything from it so I stopped going, (F2M)*.

When asked about friendships, one child remembers her kindergarten class and the special relationship she recalls between herself and her classmates:

F1D2: But when we went to [city], there was this one kid who went to that one school. I was pretty young. But this one kid, he was mentally challenged, who was in a wheelchair and everything. And um, I just...we all kind of respected each other. And we respected him. And I've got a picture of that too. Of being in Kindergarten with him.

One of the moms speaks of confiding in several friends. However, the other two moms express sadness that they do not have many friends. Several children talk of their awareness of their mom's limited friendships, as one child illustrates:

F2S2: She doesn't have friends she can talk to.

F2M: I, uh, actually don't have too many friends. I have a sponsor.

Hope—life is good

There is an overall appreciation for the recent changes away from their past life. As well, all of the participants speak of their success in leaving their past and entering a better place that holds hope for the future. The following comments summarize their feelings toward their current life:

F1M: There 's not been drinking or drugs in the home for 4 ½ years....

F1S1: We spent four years there.... I made really good friends....

F2S1: I felt a bit of peace after that one (release from anger)....

F1D2: I like this House. It's Better Now....

F1S1: Now: Going to school all the time; do stuff; do my bike riding; doing good in school. So life is good....

CHAPTER FIVE

REFLECTIONS

Summary of the Study

This research explored what can happen when children and their mothers join in a discussion of their awareness of the impact on children during dad violence against moms. It intentionally challenged the current omission of children from statistical data on domestic violence. A preliminary investigation into reporting bodies revealed a lack of precise statistical data on children in domestic violence profiles. As well, a further investigation revealed a body of research that speaks, primarily, *about* children rather than *with* children's voices.

My experience with counselling children and their mothers, at the Children Who Witness Abuse Program, brought me to an awareness that children often struggle alone through years of exposure to father violence. This knowledge led me to a desire to investigate the place of initial awareness and acknowledgement of the impact on children, and why it took so long for children and their mothers to be ready for counselling. Although it appears strange to me now, I originally believed children and their mothers failed to realize the impact on the children. As well, I believed that when their awareness arrived, they would seek supportive intervention.

My counselling work with children was, and remains, a purposive exploration to afford children therapeutic space to express their experiences. Therefore, my research needed to reflect this construct as I presented them as full participants in the study. As a result, the family interviews with children and their mothers used Jean Baker Miller's construction of "growth-fostering relationships" (Miller & Stiver, 1997, p. 16), and

Ruthanne Kurth-Schai and Karen J. Warren's constructions of the term "ecofeminism" (Warren, 1997), to create a space that would promote interconnection between family and community during these interviews. This research, then, was an inquiry into the remembered awareness of the family as they lived through dad violence.

Three families consisting of three biological mothers and nine children were interviewed using grounded theory analysis. The emergence of a core category: *A Very Bumpy Road*, and five subcategories: *introduction: agreeing to participate in family interviews about dad violence (DV), what is DV?, first responses to DV, legal/outside interventions, and we are in recovery*, reflect the commonalities of experience through all three families in spite of their diverse experiences. I believe there are possibilities of relevance beyond the research site even though they are the reflections of a small group of participants within a finite time and place.

The overriding finding of this research was that children are not only aware of the dad violence in their homes, from its inception; they hold invaluable perceptions and insights well worth documenting. Their struggle is not in their lack of awareness, but in finding safe and comfortable places. Participants had experienced many years of dad violence—yet they did not have the ability to speak about it coherently during our initial interviews. There was a lack of coherence in their talk even though all of the participants had attended counselling and other interventions in the past. The information partially informed their thoughts, and caused a very bumpy transition into their speech. van der Kolk speaks directly of this phenomenon in his study of traumatic stress:

...the very nature of a traumatic memory is to be dissociated, and to be stored initially as sensory fragments that have no linguistic components....Indeed, [study subjects] who claimed to have been abused as children were, even as adults, unable to tell a complete story of what had happened to them.

(van der Kolk, cited in van der Kolk, McFarlane & Weisaeth, 1996, p. 289)

The findings in my study concur with van der Kolk, in that our discussion of the violence did not cause memory retrieval of the originally dissociated incidents. However, participants did speak of other memories coming forward after our interviews. As well, when asked if they believed other family members' accounts of incidents, they emphatically said, "yes". Family members appeared to appreciate taking part in a negotiated construction of their independent memories as it gave them further knowledge to aid them in their efforts to reconstruct what had happened to them.

Throughout the research process I was engulfed in remaining mindful of the direction the data indicated, and not with how my findings would relate to the currently accepted constructs. Therefore, when I originally reflected upon my findings I saw simplistic titles, perhaps appropriate to my participants, but certainly not significant to experts. My intentions, however, remained true to my participants and my data. I remained steadfast to what flowed up from the data, and resolved to present my data as it had appeared.

It is only now, after a time of reflective thought that I have arrived at an appreciation of the emerged findings. For my work as a counsellor of children and their families often involved segregating primary from mitigating factors at play within the family. As well, I often struggle with the differences between family assessments and individual children's presentations. I now realize there may be differing memories between family members that exacerbate the presenting struggle. There is a constant need "to assess all areas of children's adjustment (family, school, community) as well as different relationships that may be problematic" (Jaffe, Sudermann, & Geffner, 2000, p.

3). Therefore, the differentiation between children's, mom's, dad's, and other's experiences become of primary importance in enabling an understanding of the differing perceptions contained within one family.

As well, there is a concern among published experts that relational understanding of the complex dynamics related to dad violence are important to include as factors impacting battered families:

Interventions will be more effective when they are ecologically based, taking into account the variety of systemic forces, community and family dynamics, and individual processes that contribute to this complex psychosocial problem.

(Rossman, Hughes & Rosenberg, 2000, p. 155)

Additionally, they suggest that we "be more certain that we are obtaining the views of the women and children themselves, in their own words" (p. 28). These suggested tasks for research match precisely with my research goals.

The findings in this research study with regard to dad violence stand out plainly. All of the children in this research have suffered child abuse. They all have, at a minimum, been terrorized during dad violence against their moms. At the end of this research I am left with the question of how the alteration of *abused* to *exposed* minimizes children's actual experiences. Literature in this area now acknowledges the co-occurrence of woman battering and child maltreatment (United Nations Children's Fund, 2000; Hester, Pearson & Harwin, 2000). As well, intervention practices reflect a need for a coordinated community response to protect children and women from dad violence (Jaffe, Lemon, Sandler, & Wolfe, 1996; Joint Committee on Domestic Violence, 1999; Geffner, Jaffe, & Sudermann, 2000; Spears, 2000).

The experiences of children and their mother's as they initiate outside intervention has long been documented in the literature on domestic violence (Jaffe,

Wolfe, & Wilson, 1990; Mullender and Morley, 1994). However, the findings in this research held special meanings for the families as they responded to the analyzed data. The analysis interpreted their words in a way that acknowledged all their attempts to keep each other safe during their struggle to end dad violence. It alters the common, *why does she stay*, to a presentation of all of the ways they had attempted to stop the violence.

Many communities now realize:

“A combined effort must be made by our government and communities in order to put an end to family violence. The myths attached to family violence must be dispelled. Domestic violence is a criminal offence and must never be viewed as a ‘private matter.’

(Joint Committee on Domestic Violence, 1999)

The importance of demonstrating, through practice, these new intentions to surviving families is reflected in their overall feelings of negative impact at the hands of potential supporters. The idea of *help* to the participants of this research is cited below:

Researcher: I was actually thinking in terms of ... help, though.

Child: In terms of help?

Researcher: Yeah.

Child: Help to accept it or help to ...

Researcher: You would have an expectation of ... of help.

Child: What do you mean?

The experiences of the participants in this research do not reflect the goals of the new community programs. However, it must be noted that Prince George does not employ an official Domestic Violence Response Team. A volunteer Violence Against Women in Relationship (VAWIR) Committee currently works within the city. As well, the difference between past and current practices is not within the parameters of this research.

The final finding of this study, also, reflects its retrospective situation. All the participants feel outstanding success in being *in recovery* due to their successful paths to

a different kind of life. The families are primarily successful in their attempts to shield themselves from the violent dad.

Feminist organizations continue to highlight the need to address the violent man directly, as the following citation from an informal conversation on an End-violence UNIFEM listserv reflects:

I have noticed some distinctions in how some historically oppressed groups approach batterer treatment/programs. As an African American I wanted our men to be held accountable and I was also aware of the historical racism and genocide perpetuated by the very institutions we were seeking that accountability from. The criminal justice institutions, as we know, have been particularly notorious. Thus, a holistic approach often reflected such awareness and a model that viewed batterers as part of the group that needed to be reeducated but not cut off from the community.... So instead of "isolating" our men and making them even more vulnerable...many of us looked at more culturally specific interventions and approaches that intended to reintegrate batterers.

(Rahman, 2002)

Specific examples of this type of holistic intervention are *Just Therapy* in New Zealand (Waldegrave, 1990), and *The Sanctuary* in Pennsylvania, USA (Bloom, 1997). Hopefully, one day soon there will be a differentiation within the main body of literature that will reflect interventions that end father violence through changes in violent men rather than listing programs that teach women and children defensive strategies against violent partners.

Limitations of the Study

As I reflect upon this journey called research, I see how I would, at this time, invite my participants to soften their judgement when reflecting into their past. So I, too, need to be mindful of the distance travelled, rather than the lack of foresight evident through my present enlightened perception. Quests—even small research samples—do not begin with answers. As we settle into the discussion of what was then and what is

now—it is the difference that we note and document. Changing the beginning would change the end—we know not how. Therefore, if our hearts sing throughout our journey, it is enough.

That said, I do not feel an ending. Rather, I see many doors opened. Although my participants and I said our good-byes, their words carry me forward to further quests. Yet they are gone and I can no longer consult them. In grounded theory the discussions are meant to continue until all feel spent and completely saturated. This study began with an agreement to a specific commitment of time. Therefore, the scope of this study was tied to that time frame.

I am very cognizant of the change in discourse between the first and last interviews with each family. The first interviews lacked connection and comprehension between participants and myself, whereas the final interviews felt synchronized and open. Therefore, as mentioned above, more time with the participants would have possibly brought forth more disclosures as the level of trust and understanding grew between us. The more I talk with families battered by father violence, the more I am aware of the stages of trust and their accompanying levels of disclosure.

Family interviews limit discourse in the same manner that children's presence in a room can limit topics. As well, the presence of parents will modify the responses of children. Therefore, it can safely be assumed that some information is not present in this study.

As well, there was a limitation exposed within this study as I used daughter, son, and mother to cloak the children and mothers in confidentiality. This was an intentional research design to accommodate the parameters of the research goals. However, it also

limits the scope of this research. These generalized words hide the diverse and varied human identities of the participants. This research experience was limited to their role within the family.

The ages of the children also limited the scope of this research. Older Children are more articulate, independent, and bring forth knowledge and insights related to their own interests. Therefore, the findings of this study could be developmentally specific to the children studied.

Finally, I strongly recommend individual microphone headsets and audio recorders for each family member. As well, additional audio recorders for the interview room and in close proximity to the researcher are suggested to function as the master recording device. This could be perceived as excessive. However, children's voices alter dramatically during the interview depending on their level of confidence. After the first interview I used the practice of repeating back what each participant said, as sometimes their language was not only inaudible during transcription, but also not in conventional western English. Therefore, each word needed to be heard clearly. As well, there were collective responses that required listening up to 10 times to *each* voice overlay. The collective responses did not occur frequently, were usually in response to an emotional piece of information, and certainly contained some of the most interesting data.

Therefore, separating each voice in the family interview is highly recommended for their overall value to the data set. Also, the family interviews may not have been useable if I had not used the UNBC Media Centers excellent audio equipment. Quality equipment was essential.

Implications for Further Study

This study focused on presenting the emerging awareness of children and their mothers as they survive their lives with violent fathers. Children and their mother's demonstrated a willingness to speak of their experiences during this research process—at the same time they revealed a lack of places where support and understanding occurred for them. It appears that it is not a lack of awareness that keeps children and mothers silent about the violence toward the mother. Disclosures related to father violence against mothers appear to be perceived as unhelpful. I would suggest that the reasons for silence between mothers, children and potential interveners could direct research study to a place that would further enable successful intervention for children and their mothers.

I would like to extend an invitation to my research participants to co-create a new piece of research, beginning with a meeting about what they would like to bring forward from their research participation. The new research would be constructed from that discussion, and would reflect their process of finding healing places—what is helpful for them and what is not.

The participants in this research were very aware of a hierarchy of violence situated within the family. Their strong agreement in this place brings forth the comment posed by Fottrell:

Writing on the girl-child Goonesekere argues that governments have initiated programmes for women 'without considering linkages to children'.... 'the separation of women and girl-children's issues has...turned out to be a disadvantage for both groups' and that 'laws and policy...need to address the area of discrimination against girls and women on the basis that these interventions are two aspects of a single issue.

(Fottrell, 2000, p. 55)

Due to the ages of the children in this study, the differentiation between boy/man and girl/woman was not distinct. Also, as the interviews progressed I became very aware of the boy-child and girl-child differences in the responses, as well as the dynamics of the hierarchy. This awareness brought forth a wondering about the relationship between children's interventions, men's interventions, and women's interventions. At what point does joint counselling between boy/man and girl/woman become contraindicated, and what are the criterion used to ensure the safety of the girl/woman? It seems a timely consideration to develop research on existing, or potential, linkages between service providers to children and their mother's to uncover what is necessary to safeguard families during interventions. Rabenstein and Lehmann specifically address this issue in their family group treatment approach (Rabenstein and Lehmann, 2000, p. 185-205).

This study was also a place of serendipity. My work with the *Pathways*, although meant only as a background piece to the research, became a healing tool for Family 1. As the length of time to complete a family pathway became known, I did not spend time creating it with the other two families. The contrast between Family 1 and the other two families is reflected in Family 1's strong response to the research as *bringing the family much closer together*. I have noticed this same result in other, non-research families. I would now like to conduct research on the implications and impact of *Pathway* construction as a way of bringing families into deeper connection.

As well, the findings in this study suggest family interviews with children and their mothers as a possible source to address an "area of need [for] more innovative interventions to be conducted, which are designed to enhance the parent-child relationship" (Rossman, Hughes, & Rosenberg, 2000, p. 125). As well, this research

presents an addition to Eisikovits, Winstok and Enosh (1998) “to understand how children who live in a violence-ridden environment construct their reality, consisting of intimate relationships, violence, and parenting” (Eisikovits & Winstok, 2001, p. 204)

The final implication I wish to note, at this time, is related to the findings in this research around the children’s vulnerability to developmental disruptions due to the myriad of stressors present in a family where dad violence toward mom is present. Whether the developmental disruptions occur due to the trauma of the exposure to violence, constant changes in schools, severance from friends, physical abuse, emotional abuse or any of the other factors so prevalent in children abused through dad violence against moms—to assume the children are safe is a myth. Children *are* terrorized by the violence; children *are* at high risk for physical assault; children *are* severed from friends and school. Armed with this knowledge, we need to move research efforts to focus on successful strategies that end the violence and keep children thriving and growing to their maximum potential. Sending abused children to anger management is inadequate. We need to stop labelling children as behavior problems instead of assigning responsibility to the father. Forensic research on children’s past attendance in early intervention programs, correlated with police and hospital files on domestic violence, could bring forth much information on the contrast between support and non-support for young children living with father violence in their homes.

I could not find research where children and their mothers were interviewed using a relational, ecofeminist, family interview model. Indeed, I could find only one group of researchers where:

The framework is holistic and based on information from multiple sources, thus reflecting multiple perspectives. The framework is also based on the principle that

one never seeks an informant's evaluation of another's experience but only his or her own.

(Eisikovits & Winstok, 2001, p. 217)

The findings in my research concerning the participant's awareness of their need for family, friendships, and community relationship to empower their efforts to bring hope and new possibilities to their lives support the initiatives currently under construction in many cities and regions (Jaffe, Lemon, Sandler, & Wolfe, 1996; Joint Committee on Domestic Violence, 1999; Spears, 2000). It is my hope that this small research study lends itself to advancement of research in this area of focus.

Additional Reflections

- Children in this study wanted to talk about the violence they saw and felt in their home. Creating a space where moms and children can speak and hear each other in a safe and respectful way was an extremely helpful first step in forming reconnection between the mom and her children.
- Bringing forth reflections and comparing each reflection to the other family members' allowed everyone in the room to realize how many different assumptions were present within each family member's memories. As well, working from the premise that trauma often causes different memories for a single event allowed each difference to be respected as one aspect of the collective family memory. I now believe it is not beneficial to work toward discovering the truth—rather it is a process of discovering and sharing all aspects of each memory that shows great possibility for a beneficial result for the family.
- Children in this study were observers and responders to dad violence in the home. As well, it appeared that older children adopt the role of protector when dad is not

present. Therefore, I would suggest it is initially beneficial to state and reinforce counsellor responsibility for safety during counselling sessions. This would free children from this role, and create a shift that would open new possibilities around mom asserting herself into a parenting role that is free from the dominating/dominated model of family.

- All of the children in this study believe that violent dads cannot be stopped. Dads can be forced to leave, but they always return in their own time. I believe the only way to impact this belief system within the family would be to stop dad's dominance. Allowing continuing unscheduled access is inappropriate for these families as it allows the violent dads to exert continuing control over the family.
- All the children in this study held themselves accountable for their inappropriate behaviour. They were aware of the impact of the dad violence on their feelings, but retained personal responsibility for their lack of control when attempting to change their responses to those feelings. I would, therefore, suggest that children be made aware of the common alterations found in children's behaviour when there is dad violence. This would ease the children's feelings of inadequacy.
- Finally, isolation was a factor that continued to impact the participants in this study. Therefore, connecting these families to each other and to others is very beneficial and important to their recovery.

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Appendix A

Outline of Research Purpose and Procedures for Potential Recommenders of Participants

Outline of Research Purpose and Procedures for Potential Recommenders of Participants

My name is Barbara Ingram, and I am currently a graduate student in the Master of Education (counselling) Program at the University of Northern British Columbia. I am conducting a research study on the initial awareness process of identification and acknowledgement of the **impact on children** exposed to father violence against mothers. I am requesting participants for this research from recommendations through family workers who have relationships with families where children have been identified as 'children exposed to father violence against mothers', currently referred to as ***Children Who Witness Abuse***, in British Columbia.

Families for this study should be oriented to time, place, and person. They, also, should be capable of assessing their own desire to partake in this research voluntarily. **Voluntary participation is mandatory.** The purpose of this research is to discuss their awareness process during the time of identification of the **impact on the children** in the family to "exposure to father violence against mothers".

Please read the **PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT** form attached to this letter for a detailed synopsis of my research and the required criterion.

Please contact me, or my research supervisor, Glen Schmidt, if you require any further information or have any queries. *Thank you.*

Barbara Ingram
M.Ed. (ABT), UNBC
Phone: (250) 992-1501
Email: ingram@quesnelbc.com

UNBC Supervisor
Glen Schmidt
Assistant Professor
Social Work Program
(Interim Chair)
BA, BSW, MSW, PhD (ABD), RSW
Phone: (250) 960-6519

Appendix B

My Job as a Member of this Research Team

(Participant Informed Consent)

My Job as a Member of This Research Team

(Participant Informed Consent)

I understand that as a paid worker in this research study I am expected to:

1. Understand that IT IS ME who decides if I am interested in joining this research.

My family has been invited to do this research by people who know that there was father violence in our home. And my family has decided to meet with the researcher, Barb Ingram, to find out more about her research study. Today, after we talk to Barb, we will decide if we are interested in continuing in this research study. I understand that I cannot decide about other family members joining the research study, but I am expected to decide what I would like to do. I understand that it is okay for all, or some, of my family to participate.

2. Understand that IT IS ME who decides what I will say while I am here.

I understand that I may attend the research sessions and choose to say nothing, only a little, or lots of things. I, also, understand that as a paid and equal member of this study, I am expected to have my own memories of father violence, and that my memories may, or may not, be the same as other members in my family.

3. Understand that IT IS ME who is the expert on how I felt about the father violence in our family. Other family members may know how they felt about what happened in our family; but they may, or may not, know how I felt about the violence. Each family member will have his or her own feelings, knowledge and thoughts about the violence.

4. Understand that my family and I will be invited to attend 3 interviews with the researcher, Barb Ingram. IT IS UP TO ME to decide to attend. I may stop being part of any interview at any time. I may attend the whole interview; answer questions or

just listen; stay in the interview room or ask to wait in another room. I will be paid \$10.00 for each interview that I begin. The interviews will be 1-2 hours long.

5. Understand that the researcher, Barb Ingram, will be asking me about what I know about children who live with fathers who are violent to the mothers. She will also ask me questions about where I was born, where I have lived, extended family and friends and how much support and help they give me, questions about my relationship with my father, how the violence was stopped, and how safe I am from witnessing father violence now. I may choose to answer the questions myself, rely on other family members to answer the questions for me, or ask not to have the questions about me answered at all. IT IS UP TO ME how much I say, or allow others, to say for me.
6. Understand that as a participant in this research study I am expected to give respect to, and receive respect from, all others in the interview room. When very frightening things happen, each person may remember different, or similar, things. That is okay. I understand that I may not talk about what my family says in the interview session, unless they give me specific permission. Barbara will not discuss what I say in the interviews with anyone, including my family members, **except with my permission**.
7. Understand that each of the interviews will be audiotaped. No one will listen to these tapes except Barb and her UNBC supervisor, Glen Schmidt. Barb will double-lock all recorded materials for one year and then destroy them. If I have any complaints or worries about the research, I have the phone number and address to the Office of Research at UNBC and can contact them about my concerns.
8. Understand that Barbara will be sharing information about what she learns from our family with other people. Any information she gives to other people about me will

not use my name, so no one will know it was me who said it. If I do not like what is written about me, I may ask to have it changed or removed, and Barbara will respect my wishes.

9. Understand that the researcher, Barbara Ingram, and her research information are not available for any legal proceedings regarding custody and access decisions.
10. Understand that Phoenix Transition House is available to give support to my family during and after this research study. There are counselling staff for mothers and counselling staff for children should any part of the research process cause distress to me or any of my family. These services are offered free of charge.
11. Understand that there could be a time when Barbara and/or legal authorities may interfere with the expectations in this research study. They are:
 - **If a family member, or I, discuss a plan of self harm**
 - **If a family member, or I, discloses a plan to harm another person or animal.**
 - **If a family member, or I, discloses information of a child (under age 19) in need of assistance due to neglect or abuse.**
 - **If a family member, or I, is court-ordered to testify in a legal matter that concerns themselves or another participant.**

If any of these situations are present, the participants, (including Barb Ingram) are bound by law to report to an authority so that help may be offered as soon as possible.

DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT—These definitions will tell you when you need to talk to someone about what is happening.

*** If you are feeling very sad or bad about yourself and it is because of something that someone keeps acting, doing, or saying to you—tell someone about it ***

Physical Abuse: non-accidental injury to your body (if someone consistently forces you to move out of the way or you will be hurt by their actions—this is, also, physical abuse—especially in young children who lack co-ordination)

Sexual Abuse: (2 types—‘touching’ and ‘no touching’). ‘Touching’ sexual abuse is when someone touches your private parts without good reason (medical) and/or asks you to touch their private parts. ‘Non-touching’ sexual abuse is when someone makes you feel bad about being a boy/girl (whoever you are) by showing things, saying things, or acting things.

(If someone is consistently touching you in a way that makes you feel sad or bad about yourself and you cannot get him or her to stop—tell someone about it.

Sometimes it is hard to tell the difference between physical and sexual abuse)

Emotional abuse: When someone consistently makes you feel bad about yourself by saying hurtful things to you.

Neglect: When someone consistently keeps you from feeling cared about. Food, clothing, shelter and love are basic necessities. This is not just in the care of your mom and dad. It could be babysitters, foster parents, or others who have been given the responsibility to care for you in the absence of your parent.

I have discussed my job as a member of this research team with my family and the researcher, Barb Ingram. I understand I may now choose to participate in the research study, or I may choose not to participate in the research study.

Circling the 'yes' beside my name means YES to joining the research team

Circling the 'no' beside my name means NO to joining the research team.

Name yes/no

Name yes/no

Name yes/no

Name yes/no

Name yes/no

Signature of Researcher

Date

I wish to receive a copy of the research results: _____ *yes* _____ *no*

If yes, Please fill in your name and address of your family:

Appendix C

*Transition House Agreement of Support to Women and Children Participating in UNBC
Research Study Conducted by Barbara Ingram*

Transition House Agreement of Support to Women and Children Participating in UNBC Research Study Conducted by Barbara Ingram

I, xxxx xxxxxxxx, Executive Director of xxxxxx Transition House, have discussed and read the outline of research purpose and procedures designed by Barbara Ingram.

I supervised Barbara while she worked as the Children Who Witness Abuse Coordinator and Counsellor for the xxxxxx Transition House Society. Therefore I know and trust her competent dedication to her work. I am confident of Barbara's work on behalf of women and children attempting recovery from abuse by violent men. We understand each other and work well together.

Xxxxxx Transition House has offered comfort, counselling and sanctuary to battered women and their children for over twenty years. We are well honed in our skills. And we agree to use our expertise in aiding Barbara Ingram in her research study to the best of our ability. This will include matching families to the research criterion and initiating contact with them; as well as offering support and counselling to the research families should a need arise. We have counselling staff for the mothers, and counselling staff for children. We offer these services free of charge, for as long as required by the family.

Executive Director
Transition House

Date

Appendix D

Contact Information for Families

Information for Families

Thank you for offering to participate in this research study.

This study is conducted under the direction and supervision of the UNBC Faculty of Research and Graduate Studies, Department of Education, Counselling Program. I, Barbara Ingram, am a UNBC graduate student in Educational Counselling and a former CWWA (Children Who Witness Abuse) counsellor who hopes my research will enable a wider understanding of how to support children and their mothers in the aftermath of “father violence against mothers”.

The purpose of this research is to discuss and understand the awareness process of children and their mothers during the time of identification of the impact—on the children in their family—to “exposure to father violence against mothers”.

Please contact me, my research supervisor, or the Office of Research and Graduate

Studies if you have any questions or desire any further information.

I welcome you to the Research Team!

Barbara Ingram

Researcher:

Barbara Ingram
M.Ed. (ABT), UNBC
Phone: (250) 992-1501
Email: ingram@quesnelbc.com

Research Supervisor:

UNBC Supervisor
Glen Schmidt
Assistant Professor
Social Work Program
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Office of Research and Graduate Studies
UNBC

3333 University Way
Prince George, BC
V2N 4Z9

Phone Toll Free within Canada: 1-888-419-5588

xxxxxx Transition House
(for counselling services)
(xxx) xxx-xxxx

Appendix E

Guiding Questions for Background Information

Guide for Background Information Questions

Questions to Child/ren = C:

Questions to Mother = M:

_____ = violent father

C: & M: age: _____ m/f: _____

address: _____ phone: _____

What does your family call "father violence against mothers"?

1. C: & M: Who lives at your house?

2. C: How often do you see _____?

M: What is your current relationship with _____?

3. C: Have you lived in one house or more than one house? Where is your favorite place to live?

M: Did the violence have any impact on your living arrangements?

4. C: How long did _____ live at your house?

M: How long did you live with _____?

5. C: Do you have a favorite relative? Who is it?

M: Who is your closest family, not including family present?

(Did they know about the father violence? How did they know?)

6. C: Who is your best friend?

M: Who are your closest family friends?

(Did they know about the father violence? How did they know?)

7. C: Do you remember the first violent thing _____ did to your mom? What was it?

M: When did the violence toward you begin?

8. **C: & M:** Who decided to stop the violence? What did they do? Were they successful?
9. **C:** Who or what happened to help stop _____'s violence?
M: Who or what has been your best support in stopping the violence?
10. **C: & M:** Do you have any concerns today about _____'s violence continuing? (if no, skip to question 12)
11. **C: & M:** How do you think this could happen? Have you thought about ways to prevent it?
12. Complete all cities you have lived, and then co-construct Genogram with other participants.

Appendix F

Guiding Questions for Awareness of Impact on Children

Guiding Questions for Awareness of Impact on Children

Questions to child = **C**:

Questions to mother = **M**:

_____ = violent father

1. **C**: What are the biggest feelings or reactions you have felt because of the violence against your mom?

M: What has been the most noticeable impact on your children because of father violence against you?

2. **C**: Who was the first to notice that it was not good for you to see father violence against your mom?

M: What do you remember about your first noticing the impact on your children?

3. **C: & M**: Did anyone say anything to you at that time, or did you think about it by yourself?

4. **C: & M**: How did you feel about this awareness coming to you?

5. **C: & M**: Did you discuss this awareness with anyone in your family? (if no, go to question 7)

6. **C: & M**: How did you respond to the discussion?

7. **C**: Have you ever talked to any of your friends about how it made you feel to see your mom hurt? How did the conversation start?

M: Have you ever talked to any of your friends about your awareness of the impact on children? Who started the conversation?

8. **C**: Can you remember a time when talking to someone, or hearing someone talk about how you were feeling about the violence made you feel better? What was helpful?

M: Can you remember a time when talking to someone, or hearing someone talk about your children's exposure to the violence made you feel better? What was helpful?

9. **C:** Have you ever talked to someone about the violence and then felt worse about everything? What do you think was hurtful about that talking?

M: Have you ever talked to someone about your children's exposure to the violence and then felt worse about everything? What do you think was hurtful about that talking?

10. **C:** Have you ever heard or seen people talk about father violence and then felt worse about everything? What do you think was hurtful about that talking?

M: Have you ever heard or seen people talk about children's exposure to the violence and then felt worse about everything? What do you think was hurtful about that talking?

11. **C:** Did your father ever realize how bad you were feeling about his violence toward mom?

M: Did _____ ever realize that his violence was having an effect on your children?

12. **C:** What was the biggest change for you when it was noticed that the violence was harming you?

M: What was the biggest change for you when the impact on children was identified?

13. **C:** What was the best thing that happened to you through being identified as a child witness to father violence?

14. **M:** What was the best thing that happened to you through being identified as a child witness to father violence?

15. **C:** Was there anything you wish had not changed when you were identified?

M: Was there anything you wish had not changed when the impact on your children was identified?

16. **C:** Do you know more about how the violence was effecting you now than when you first became aware of being effected by father violence?

M: Do you know more about how the violence effects children now than when you first became aware of the impact on children?

17. **C: & M:** What do YOU think is the most important thing to know about children who are exposed to father violence against mothers?

18. **C:** What knowledge have you gained from your experience of learning about your exposure to father violence that you could share with others?

19. **M:** What knowledge have you gained from your experience of learning about your child's exposure to father violence that you could share with others?

20. **C: & M:** Do you think it is of any importance to acknowledge and identify father violence against mothers from children's eyes?

21. Any further comments? (written responses on separate paper are welcomed)

Appendix G

Evaluation of the Thesis Process

Evaluation of Research Process

1. Were you aware of any benefit to you, or other family members, while taking part in this research?

2. Were you aware of any harm to you, or other family members, while taking part in this research?

3. Would you agree to participate in other research if asked?

(check as many answers as are correct for you)

Paid Research Yes ____ No ____ Maybe ____

Unpaid Research Yes ____ No ____ Maybe ____

Please use this space (and back of this page) for any further comments or suggestions:

Thank you so much.

Appendix H

A Very Bumpy Road:

Emerging Awareness of the Impact of Dad Violence on the Children

1. Introduction: Agreeing to Participate in Family Interviews about Dad Violence (DV)

- a. An Opportunity to Talk and Remember
 - i. *Being Ready*
 - ii. *A Safe Place to Talk to Each Other*
- b. 'How long' and 'When' are Tough Questions
- c. Misunderstandings and Assumptions
- d. Finding Contradictions Between Others and Within Self
 - i. *Fuzzy Memories*
 - ii. *Remember differently from others*
 - iii. *No Memory of What Others Remember*
- e. New Information to Process
 - i. *Learning Things from the Research Process*
 - ii. *Old memories coming up again*
 - iii. *Recovering new memories*
- f. Reopening Traumatic Memories
 - i. *Uncomfortable Questions*
 - ii. *Feeling the Trauma Again*

2. What is Dad Violence (DV)?

- a. Who is 'Dad'?
- b. Violence Happening to Mom
 - i. *Mom is the Primary Target*
 Terrorized, Threatened, Stalked, Controlled
 Kicked, Punched in the Head, Lifted off chair by Hair,
 Arguments escalated to Throwing Objects and Fists
- c. Violence Happening to Children
 - i. *Watching and Listening*
 - ii. *Physical Child Abuse*
 When children intervene to Help Mom
 When Dad uses harm to children as a means to hurt Mom
 Stepchildren Targeted
 - iii. *Between Siblings*
 - iv. *Sexual Child Abuse*
 By Dad
 Between Siblings
- d. Violence Happening to Others
 - i. *Violence Against Other People*
 Girlfriends, Ex-wives and Other Family Members
 - ii. *Animals are also Targets*
 Family Pets
 - iii. *Objects in House Trashed and Unsafe House*

3. First Responses to DV.

a. Dad's Response

- i. *Stops children from helping Mom or Escaping.*
- ii. *Leaves (is arrested, runs out, enters another relationship)*
- iii. *Wants to Get Along ('at the door all charming')*
- iv. *No Apologies to Mom*
- v. *Breaks In*
- vi. *Threatens Mom*
- vii. *Applies for Access and/or Custody of Children*

b. Mom's Response

- i. *Becomes Physically Involved in Violence*
- ii. *Normalizes the Violence*
- iii. *Seeks Help from Others (children, authorities)*
- iv. *Moves*
- v. *Makes Dad Leave*
- vi. *Supports Dad*
- vii. *Believes She is Responsible for Safety in the Home*
- viii. *Remains Passive during Attack*
- ix. *Unaware until Children become Physically Involved*

c. Children's Response

- i. *Fear of Dad's Rage (watch without intervening)*
- ii. *Action/Reaction Response/Intervene to Protect Mom*
- iii. *Sensitivity to Sounds*
- iv. *No memory of Dad's Violence*
- v. *Attempt to Get Help*
- vi. *Remain Silent*
- vii. *Become Protector of Mom and Siblings*
- viii. *Support Dad*
- ix. *Go With the Flow/Never Had it Dealt With*
- x. *Don't Want to See Dad*
- xi. *Normalize the Violence*

d. Extended Family and Friends Witness and Respond to DV

- i. *Help with Moves*
- ii. *Witness and/or Intervene*
- iii. *Someone to Talk to*
- iv.. *Initially Supportive, then Estranged/no support*

4. Legal/Outside Interventions

- a. Mom Initiated
 - i. Charges, Restraining Orders, Peace Bonds, Ex Parte Orders, Enter Safe Home, Place Children In Care
- b. Dad Initiated
 - i. Files for Custody and/or Access
 - ii. Reports Mom to Ministry
- c. Vicious Cycle
 - i. Police Presence Normal in the Neighbourhood (no help)
 - ii. Family (Initially Supportive, Currently Estranged)
 - iii. Police (arrest, supervise Peace Bonds)
 - iv. Courts and Jail (charges, convictions, restraining orders, peace bonds, ex parte orders, award Dad access)
- d. Nothing Changes
 - i. Schools (Bullied, Troublemakers)
 - ii. Transition Houses (New Friends, Support)
 - iii. Group Homes, Foster Care, Counselling
 - iv. Ministry for Children and Families (apprehend children to foster care or group home, behavior/anger management for children, parenting help for Mom, view Mom's concerns as a custody issue)
- e. Separation from Mom

5. We are in Recovery

a. Living a Different Kind of Life

b. Dad is Not Around

- i. *Address Unknown*
- ii. *Not Quite Sure it's Ended (Dad has access)*
- iii. *Fond Memories*
- iv. *Miss Dad*
- v. *No Dads*

c. Not Really in the Past

- i. *Flashbacks*
- ii. *Lots of Unmanageable Feelings*
- iii. *Hierarchy of Violence*
- iv. *Sibling Violence*
Violent behaviors match Dad's
Fighting is Physical
- v. *Short Tempers in the Family*

d. Finding Places to Talk and to Heal

- i. *Silent in Most Places*
- i. *Groups and Support*
- iii. *Friends*

e. Hope—Life is Good

- i. *There's not been drinking or drugs in the home for 4 ½ years.*
- ii. *I like this House. It's Better Now.*
- iii. *Now: Going to school all the time; do stuff; do my bike riding; doing good in school. So life is good*
- iv. *We spent four years there.... I made really good friends.*
- v. *I felt a bit of peace after that one. (release from anger)*

Appendix I

Violence in Relationships Checklist

VIOLENCE IN RELATIONSHIPS CHECKLIST

1. To be completed on both attended and unattended cases.
2. Retain on the inside of the left file cover.

A. CASE FACTS

1. Responded to complaint
☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Reason documented.
2. ☐ Victim present
☐ Assailant present
☐ Witnesses present
3. ☐ Peace Bond/Court Order
☐ Protection Order Registry: tel: 1 (800) 990-9888
☐ Agency, file no. and details documented.
☐ CPIC
4. Arrested assailant
☐ Yes, first Appearance Date: _____
☐ No
☐ Reason documented.
5. ☐ Fingerprinted assailant.
☐ Indicated Violence in Relationships on C216.
6. Assailant has history of:
☐ violence in relationships.
☐ violence.
☐ Agency, file no. and details documented.
7. ☐ Assailant has criminal record for violence.
☐ CPIC attached.
8. ☐ Victim has made previous complaints.
☐ File no. and details documented.
9. ☐ Alcohol involved: ☐ Assailant ☐ Victim
☐ Drugs involved: ☐ Assailant ☐ Victim

10. Involved in the following:

- ☐ Threats of violence
☐ Violence
☐ Destruction of property
☐ Weapon
☐ Firearms
☐ Details documented.

11. Did investigator seize firearms:

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

12. ☐ Independent evidence of assault:

- ☐ Witnesses
☐ Visible injury
☐ Medical attention

13. Child(ren) involved/present:

- ☐ Yes: No. of child(ren) _____
☐ No Age(s): _____
☐ Child(ren) witnessed violence.
☐ Min of Children & Family Services notified.
☐ Min of Children & Family Services attended.

14. Relationship: ☐ Prior ☐ Current

- ☐ Opposite Sex ☐ Same Sex
☐ Married ☐ Divorced
☐ Common-law ☐ Separated
☐ Dating ☐ Legal Separation

15. Location of assault:

- ☐ Joint residence
☐ Victim only residence
☐ Public place
☐ Other _____

B. VICTIMVictim: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Age: _____

Offender: ☐ Male ☐ Female Age: _____

1. ☐ Statement taken
2. ☐ Photographs taken of injuries
3. ☐ Victim assistance information supplied:
☐ Victim referral card or pamphlet provided.
☐ Victim consents to referral by police.
☐ Victim of Crime Act information provided.
4. ☐ Victim remained at home.
☐ Transported victim(s) to shelter or other accommodation.
☐ Victim permission granted:
☐ Community victims services advised.
☐ Police victims services advised.

Members have a mandatory obligation to support a reluctant victim to co-operate with the investigation.

6. ☐ Other assistance provided (describe):

RCMP GRC E Div 301 (1999-10) (FLO)

Appendix J

Violence Against Women in Relationships Policy

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN RELATIONSHIPS POLICY

Police: D. Investigation/Charge (Items relevant to child(ren))

19. Any child who is present at the time a violent offence is committed should be treated in a sensitive manner. Police should be aware that witnessing violence in the family has a proven traumatic effect on children.

19a. The police officer should always consider referring the victim and her child(ren) to available community services, or to the Ministry for Children and Families for services through a support services agreement, to assist the child(ren) in dealing with the impact of witnessing the violence. The officer should bear in mind that the suspect, in order to control or intimidate the victim, may have threatened her with removal of her child(ren) by the Ministry for Children and Families or others.

19b. Where it appears that a criminal offence related to child abuse or neglect has been committed, the police officer should thoroughly investigate the potential for charges.

19c. Where a police officer has reasonable grounds to believe that a child's health or safety is in immediate danger and there are no other means available to ensure the child's health or safety, the officer may "take charge" of the child under section 27 of the *Child, Family and Community Service Act*. The police officer does not need parental consent to take charge of a child. Upon taking charge of a child, the officer must immediately notify a Ministry for Children and Families child protection social worker or a First Nations child protection social worker with the appropriate delegated authority. The child protection social worker will speak with the parent and the child if possible, and make arrangements with the police to ensure that the child is safe. This may include returning the child to the victim parent at a place of safety, taking the child to a safe place identified by the victim parent (such as the home of a relative or family friend), or taking the child to another place of safety.

19d. Where a child is not in immediate danger but the police officer believes the child has been harmed or is at risk of harm, the officer must promptly make a report to a Ministry for Children and Families child protection social worker or a First Nations child protection social worker with the appropriate delegated authority. This includes situations where a child: has been or is likely to be physically harmed, including physical harm resulting from neglect; has been or is likely to be sexually abused or exploited; or is displaying behaviours that indicate severe emotional harm. Where there is any doubt about whether a report should be made, police should consult with a child protection social worker. Once a report has been made, the child protection social worker assesses the information provided by the police and may meet with the parent and child to obtain further information before offering support services to the parent and child or initiating an investigation into the child's need for protection.